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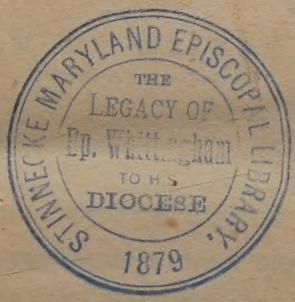

# CHRIST THE PURIFIER.

## Ten Discourses

UPON THE

## SANCTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS,

THROUGH THE LOVE AND GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

BY SAMUEL WALKER, A. M.

Late Curate of Truro, in Cornwall.

"The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—*Titus* ii, 13, 14.

WITH A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,

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# PREFACE.

As the publication of the following Sermons, so many years after the Author's departure from the world, may occasion some inquiry respecting their authenticity, I beg leave to offer some satisfaction on that head, and such as, I trust, will remove every doubt, if any can be entertained by those who may carefully read them.

It was the frequent practice of Mr. Walker, after preaching his Sermons on the Lord's day, to gratify some of his hearers with the perusal of them in the course of the following week, yielding them full liberty to copy them out, for their more effectual remembrance and edification. This was deemed (as it well deserved to be) a very kind privilege by his friends, and was

undoubtedly attended with very useful consequences to themselves, and to others, who, by their help, had an opportunity of reading them. It furnished, during his lifetime, the means of frequently recollecting what they had heard from the lips of their excellent and evangelical Pastor; and, after he was taken from them, his faithful instructions and powerful admonitions became the more valuable and the more endeared, as they brought to full and frequent remembrance his ardent love to their souls, and also, as by *these, he being dead, yet* might be considered as still *speaking* to them.

A very valuable and pious person, who was near Mr. WALKER in his last moments, and whom I am happy to consider as one of my choicest Christian friends, not only empowered me to state this fact, but was also one of the few respectable transcribers, by whose means these Sermons have been rescued from oblivion.

To those who have read the Author's other works with any attention, many testimonies in proof of the genuineness of these Discourses will probably not be needful. They bear the

strong marks of his clear and fervent mind in their style and composition. The truly excellent and Reverend Divine who favoured the world with an "Account of our Author's Life and Ministry," prefixed to his Sermons or Lectures on the *Church Catechism*, observes, respecting his abilities, that "the faculty which appeared in a more distinguished manner, was his methodical exactness and propriety in the arrangement of his thoughts, and the distribution of the several parts of the subject he undertook to elucidate. This is to be discerned throughout his writings;" and this may clearly be discerned in these Discourses. They are plain indeed, and, not being intended for the press, are without the advantage of the Author's last improvements; but they wear the fair impression of his "distinguishing faculty," as well as of his lively and experimental piety, in their whole arrangement. It also appears in this, as well as in his other works, that his earnest and continual drift was, not to raise admirers for himself, but to win souls for his MASTER. If this great object were but accomplished, there is every reason to believe, that Mr. WALKER was not unduly solicitous about any thing that merely concerned

his own fame, or ease, or interest in the world. He evidently did *not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.*

As to the Editor's concern in the book, he begs leave to say, that he has no other interest in it, than what every other Christian may and ought only to have,—a sincere willingness to promote the great cause of religion and piety; and that he has faithfully discharged the duty of an Editor, in giving no sense of his own by interpolation, nor in subtracting any from the Author's by omission; but has permitted every sentence to stand as he found it, excepting where, by the clear accident of the transcribers, a grammatical mistake had occurred, or a word been omitted, which was absolutely necessary to convey the sense. But even these defects were supplied with the utmost caution and fidelity, and with the deepest conviction, that it is not the talent of every man, and certainly not of the Editor, to offer any thing like a correction to what has proceeded from the mind or pen of Mr. WALKER.

The reader will find that great doctrine of

MAN'S FALL and UTTER DEGENERACY clearly and closely insisted upon in the following Discourses:—a doctrine which lies at the root of all true religion, and which, therefore, can never be too much the subject of memory and meditation. Mr. WALKER appears to have had a constant view of this *grand fundamental* in his public ministrations; and the reflection upon his fidelity in establishing this solemn truth, which implies so great a mortification to the pride and independence of human nature, and in that necessary mortification the consequent introduction of the life of grace, seems to have imparted comfort to him in his dying hours. "The nearer (says he, upon his death-bed) I advance towards eternity, the more I am confirmed in the truth of the doctrines which I have preached and published. I am sure they will stand the test of the last day. **CONVICTION OF SIN**, *original* as well as *actual*, is THE GRAND INLET TO ALL SAVING KNOWLEDGE: where *this* is wanting, *the superstructure will not stand;* but if this foundation be deeply laid, the heart will then welcome the glad tidings of salvation."*

* Account of Mr. WALKER's Life and Ministry, p. 86.

This conviction, by the good hand of God, not only leads the soul necessarily to CHRIST for all its redemption, but also to the BLESSED SPIRIT for all its holiness. Indeed, nothing properly can be called *holiness*, which is not derived from Him, *the only source* of all the real piety that can be found among men. The spurious activity of a fallen nature may, in religion, raise up that phantom of a righteousness which the ancient *Pharisees*, by no other principle, produced for themselves ; but we are told, on the highest authority, that, if we have nothing higher or better than such a righteousness as theirs, (and yet where shall we now find men so strict or so apparently devout?) we *shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Indeed, what such men call holiness, is chiefly confined to some few external observances, which may be done by the carnal hand and heart, and are altogether visible to the carnal eye, and all done for the erroneous purposes of purchasing with GOD, or of gaining honour from man: but the various conflicts of the soul, the inward striving against sin, the *wrestling against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in*

*high places*, or things which relate not to this present state; with all or any of these (so well explained in these Sermons,) such persons are but little troubled, nay, are often so ignorant of the things themselves, as not even to know the meaning of the terms which the SPIRIT of GOD uses to express them; but, on the contrary, are prompt to brand them with an hard name. None make so great a noise about *mint, and anise, and cummin;* but none omit more really *the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*, which, when truly known and obtained, include, or necessarily lead to all the rest.

Of all this, Mr. WALKER, in his writings, expresses his thorough knowledge. He desired to be, and was, "a Bible Divine;" one who wished to draw his religious principles entirely from the Book of God, and who proved the real influence of those principles upon his heart, by the careful conformity of his life. He maintained, after his BLESSED MASTER, that *the tree* must *first* be made good, ere the *fruit* could be good; for *men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles*; and that the grace

of God leads men (according to an old observation) to "work *from* life, and not *for* life." Accordingly, he states in his Lectures on the *Church Catechism*, that "the substance," of that excellent formulary, and "the plan upon which it is drawn up," is this; "that since we are fallen and lost creatures, and God has prepared salvation for us in JESUS CHRIST, the only way we can have that salvation effectually ours, is by a true faith begotten in us by the HOLY SPIRIT, powerful to the mortification of sin, and enabling us to live unto God."* Nothing but this divine principle, thus divinely imparted, can produce these divine effects. The HOLY SPIRIT, indeed, *governs the whole man* of a real Christian; but it is in this way; first, by implanting and invigorating a spiritual life, which is called in Scripture, *the new man*, or *the inner man*; and, then, by subduing the life of the flesh, which is altogether *corrupt* and full of *deceitful lusts*, bringing it into captivity, and into the obedience of Christ; so that this flesh, which is called *the old man*, is no longer the ruling principle, as before conversion, but a mortified and

* Sermon I, § 3.

subordinate agent, which requires a watchful guard and constraint at all times. The opposition, or conflict, of these two principles, or the subjugation of the one to the other, makes up a very considerable part of Christian experience, or Christian warfare; as Mr. WALKER hath excellently shown, in his paraphrase on part of the seventh chapter to the Romans, drawn up in the first of the following Sermons.

The one (according to the Prophet's image) is as *dross*, and the other as *gold* or *silver*, in the same ore; and CHRIST is the only REFINER or PURIFIER to *purge* and to *purify* this ore, either by gentle means, or (if need be) by *fire*. The variety of the means by which the Redeemer works, is much of the important subject of Mr. WALKER'S present Discourses.

This state of the case does, however, by no means imply a diminution of human activity in the ways of GOD, but an increase of it, and an increase to a full and true purpose. So the Apostle *laboured* and *strove*; but it was *according to* Christ's *working, which worked in him mightily*. Col. i, 29. None are or can be so

really active as those who are most under divine influence; none so *always abounding in the work of the* LORD as those who *know that their labour is not in vain in the* LORD. It would be a reproach, near to blasphemy, upon the office of the HOLY SPIRIT, to affirm, that men could be fruitful at all, or equally, if not more fruitful without him, as well as a perverse *condemnation of the generation of* GOD'S *children.* But the fact is, they who are thus truly wrought upon by divine grace, are ever willing, though with deep humility, that the general conduct of their lives should witness for them and for the sincerity of their faith before men; however, at the same time, they must and do disclaim every thing done *in* them or *by* them, in point of justification before God. On the other hand, it hath ever been seen, that those who talk of such an unpromised miracle, as that *their own power or holiness* can either bring them to GOD, or justify them before GOD, or who substitute the adverse agency of corrupt nature for the lively life of grace, have always been able or willing to do very little in the business, and that little not in so clear a way for God's glory only, or so disinterestedly for the true good of man,

as might have been expected from the pomp of those professions. And, if there be some apparently good outward actions done by such people, yet (as the incomparable Archbishop LEIGHTON justly observes) "they avail nothing [*i. e.* in God's sight, or for his blessing,] if the soul be unrenewed; as you may stick some figs, or hang some clusters of grapes upon a thorn bush, but they cannot GROW upon it."*

* Com. on St. Peter ii, 12.

Another golden passage of this truly great FATHER IN CHRIST upon the subject, will, I have no doubt, gratify the pious reader, if he has not already seen it: and therefore I make no apology for subjoining it in a note, taking leave, at the same time, to refer him to the above-mentioned *Commentary on St. Peter*, as one of the first books of practical and experimental Divinity extant in the world. "The nature of this work [of sanctification,] that wherein the very being of this purifying consists, is, *the receiving or obeying of this truth.* So Gal. iii, 1, where it is put for right believing. The chief point of obedience is believing; the proper obedience to truth, is, to give credit to it; and this *divine* belief doth *necessarily* bring the whole soul into obedience and conformity to that pure truth which is in the WORD: and so the very purifying and renewing of the soul, is this obedience of faith, as unbelief is its chief impurity and disobedience; therefore (Acts xv, 9.) faith is said to *purify the heart.* The chief worker of this sanctification is THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. They are said here to *purify themselves:* for it is certain and undeniable, that the soul itself doth act in believing or obeying the truth, but *not of itself;* it is *not the first principle of motion.* They purify their souls, but it is by *the* SPIRIT. They do it by his enlivening power, and a purifying virtue received from him. Faith, or obeying the truth, works this purity: but the HOLY GHOST works that faith; as, in the fore-cited place, God is said to *purify their hearts by faith,* verse 8. He doeth that, by giving them the HOLY GHOST. The truth is pure and purifying, yet can it not of itself purify

Mere morality, however specious, and Christian obedience, are in their spirit, if not outward form, two very different things, proceed from very opposite causes, and do not conduce to the same ends. And yet it must always be urged that any thing like goodness is better *for the common welfare of mankind,* than open sin and immorality; though, in what concerns a man's own state before GOD, it is neither available for the removal of guilt, nor for the attainment of righteousness.

It is this faith then, and this faith only, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which deadens a man to the world and its spirit, making them bad company to each other; which takes him off from his own sandy foundation, and builds him firmly upon the Rock CHRIST; which gives a cordial aversion to all sin, and crucifies the life and power of it in our fallen nature; which efficiently stimulates the soul to every good word and work; which kindles love,

the soul, but by the obeying or believing it; and the soul *cannot obey or believe* but by the SPIRIT, which works in it that faith; and by that faith purifies it, and works love in it," *Com. on St. Peter* i, 22. vol. i, p. 174, of Dr. Doddridge's Edition.

the deepest love to GOD, and most compassionate regard for the welfare of men; which raises the mind from poor and perishing things, to the most fervent expectations of the sublimest bliss; which encounters persecutions, distress, good or ill fame, poverty, wealth, sickness, and finally death itself, with a patient, persevering, invincible courage, grounded by grace upon the most solid conviction, that *in all these things* the soul is enabled to be *conqueror, and more than conqueror*, through the blessed LORD JESUS, who hath loved it, and bought it, and secured it as his own for ever. This great work, faith, according to its measure, always does; and in all this, attended with the humblest and most entire renunciation of himself, and sole dependence upon the blood and righteousness of Christ for salvation, consists the real believer's peace in this world, and preparation for another.

Here, then, we may contemplate that inward and vital religion, which, on the one hand, renounces SELF (the grand idol of our fallen nature) in all its wisdom, pride, strength, and righteousness, respecting acceptance with God; and which, on the other, as a real gift *from*

*above,* proves that it is so, by being *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality* (or censoriousness,) *and without hypocrisy.* In one word, it as much detests the swinish foulness, or carnal security, of Antinomianism, as it shuns the principles of Arminianism for their spiritual conceit, and for (what always attends it) the blind and forward self-sufficiency of a weak and incapable sinner. Thus our Lord's words are fulfilled, *If any man walk in the* DAY [meaning, by a figure, HIMSELF,] *he stumbleth not* either by error or sin, *because he seeth the light of this world: but if a man walk in the night* [the darkness of fallen nature, Eph. v, 8; 1 Thess. v, 5,] *he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.* John xi, 9, 10.

If, therefore, we see professors of religion (it is no matter how orthodox their opinions may be, or what zeal they may discover in their behalf) who follow the world in its spirit and ways; who are ever studying to indulge and pamper the flesh in all its laziness, pride, lust, luxury, or covetousness; who are the sport of

every, or indeed any, passion habitually, without compunction or control; who are the dupes of a selfish and vain-glorious heart, forgetting how impossible it is, that men should *truly believe*, who *receive*, and are glad to receive, *honour one of another*; who bear enmity to those who either stand in the way of their sins, or faithfully reprove them for their commission; who carry up and down in the world, a haughty, insolent spirit, fond of its own importance, or its own denomination; who, in a word, harbour the malignity, detraction, or other spiritual wickedness of Satan, the base lusts of the flesh, or the foolish pride of this life: these professors of religion do by such works certainly *deny* God, whatever they may pretend to *know* of him, and are a reproach to the best of causes, as well as a stumbling-block to the world about them. That there are, and have been in all ages, such professors, none can deny; but, that there ever should be such, no real Christian can cease to lament or deplore. Ps. cxix, 136. He laments the state of their souls, while he knows, that it is out of their power to invalidate THE TRUTH of GOD, though they too forcibly prove, that they

have (at present, whatever hereafter may be granted them) NO EVIDENT *part or lot in the matter.*

Upon this foundation, then, of a true faith, effectually active by love towards God and man, Christian professors are to be exhorted to work, and to work heartily. They cannot do too much in this way, either for the glory of GOD, or for *the answer of a good conscience* before the world. And, therefore, if any one pretend to have a right faith, and yet can show none of its effects; but, on the contrary, lives in the spirit and after the common methods of corruption every where about him, to such a person we must say, and strenuously too, with the Apostle, *Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* It is dead, because *alone. For, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* There is not a truly good work in the world, such as God will approve, without a living faith; and, though there may be an abundance of *notions*, there is no such thing as a living faith in any man, without the spirit of love and good works. And usually, if not always, according to opportunity,

in proportion to the life and vigour of faith, the abundance of every other internal grace and outward goodness will correspondently be found. The *good tree* will produce *good fruit*, and the *larger* it grows, the *more* fruit.

The Christian reader will, I trust, excuse the length of these introductory remarks, and join his prayers with mine, that GOD would bless this posthumous publication of Mr. WALKER'S, to the advancement of true religion, both in principle and practice, which was evidently the chief and earnest concern of his most useful life and ministry.

A. S.

*Sep.* 10, 1793.

# CHRIST THE PURIFIER.

## SERMON I.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

THE person here spoken of is CHRIST, as appears from the first verse, where he is described as having his forerunner sent before him; and, by his proper title, the LORD, the *Messenger*, or *Angel of the Covenant*. 'Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even

the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.' An important part of Christ's office is described in the third verse, the words of the text; in which he is compared to a Refiner of metals; who, by various operations, purges and purifies them from all base mixtures and worthless dross, till he reduces them to their proper clean state. Christ is said here to sit as a Refiner, to purify the sons of Levi. The sons of Levi were set apart to God's service, and so do very aptly represent God's chosen priesthood, as the Apostle calls true Christians, those who are honestly disposed to receive and obey Christ. Over these he sits as a Refiner to purge them from their dross and base mixture, and, finally, to present them to the Lord an offering in righteousness. Three things from this may be observed:

I. That the people of God have much dross and impure mixture in them.

II. That Christ purges and purifies them from the same.

III. That, in the end, he presents them in righteousness.

1st. That the people of God have much dross and impure mixtures in them. For explaining this, we may take the account St. Paul gives of himself (or of a regenerate person, whom he personates upon the matter, as we find it in the 7th chapter to the Romans, from the 14th verse to the end. I have been thinking for a time past, of opening to you this important passage, both because it is eminently descriptive of a regenerate state, and also because it draws the proof of that state from those very circumstances which are peculiarly apt to raise doubts in the minds of the best of God's children. I will, therefore, take the present favourable opportunity of doing it; for what the Apostle here says, will prove, that there are corrupt mixtures and dross

in God's children, and will also, in some sort, help us to see what they are.

Ver. 14. '*For*, whatever unenlightened minds may judge, *we*, who have been led into deep convictions of the evil of sin, *know that the* moral *law is spiritual*, and extends its requirements to the soul, in all its powers, thoughts, dispositions, principles, motives, and ends; demanding internal and spiritual, as well as external and bodily service; and forbidding heart-sins, as well as every irregularity in the life and conversation: *but* as we know this spirituality of the law, so I must confess to you, after all the renovation of the spirit of my mind, that, by means of the remainder of in-dwelling corruptions, I come so far short of these demands of this excellent law, that I find *I am*, in too great measure, *carnal* still; and, comparatively speaking, but imperfectly renewed; so that when, at seasons, corruption takes advantage of temptation, and carries me away with it, I am

so sensible of the baleful influence of my sinful nature, as to be ready to conclude I am, like wicked Ahab, *sold under sin.*

Ver. 15. *For that which,* in such cases of infirmity, temptation, and surprise, *I do, I allow not;* I never go into it with deliberate choice; the settled judgment and purpose of my soul being determinately against it: *for, what I would,* the duty I propose to myself in the governing views of life, and fain would be found in the constant practice of, *that,* too often, through inadvertence, sloth, and indolence, *do I not* in so spiritual a manner as I sincerely desire; nay, am prone to neglect: *but,* on the other hand, *what I hate,* the sins that I habitually and determinately have the utmost abhorrence of, and, at times, my earnest indignation is raised against, I say, even what I thus hate, *that* at times *do I,* to my great grief and humbling before God.

Ver. 16. *If, then, I do that which I would not;* if in all these cases wherein I

come short of the law of God, and act contrary to it, I am plainly carried away against my will and settled choice, it is plain that *I consent unto the law that it is good*, and most excellently righteous. I could not disapprove, and in my purpose and choice be set determinately against doing, the things that I do contrary to the law, unless I did cordially consent, that what the law requires is good.

Ver. 17. *Now then*, since I sincerely disallow, and hate whatever I do contrary to the law, I do most heartily esteem all its precepts concerning all things to be right; *it is no more I that do it*, not I my whole self as in my unregenerate days, not my renewed judgment and will, not I with consent and choice: it is not I therefore that do it, *but sin*, corrupt nature, *that dwelleth in me* to this hour. I say, I must charge all such omissions and commissions upon my corrupt nature, and not upon myself,

who am in the most fixed purpose of my heart determined for the law of God. I charge it on my corrupt nature, and I have all imaginable reason to do so.

Ver. 18. *For I know*, having found it by sad experience, *that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing*; I know my nature is altogether sinful, having not the least good inclination or disposition in it; as is manifest to me by daily proof; *for*, through the grace working in me, *to will*, whatever the law demands *is present with me*, so that I am wholly bent upon all holiness and goodness; and this is become the stedfast bias of my mind; *but* notwithstanding this gracious purpose of heart, *how to perform that which is good I find not*, I can never bring these purposes into due execution, being always kept back from attaining to that which I so earnestly desire to be and do.

Ver. 19. *For* I still find it thus with me, that *the good that I would* with all

my heart do, *I do not;* still I fail and come short: nay, *but*, what is greatly my grief, *the evil which I would not*, which is my abhorrence and detestation, *that I do* in too many instances.

Ver. 20. *Now*, therefore, *if*, as is the truth of my case, *I* in fact *do that I would not*, do such evil things as the full bent and inclination of my will is, upon judgment and deliberation, habitually set against, I must insist upon it, to the glory of God's grace in me, to the reputation of his law, and to the reproach of sin, that *it is no more I that do it*, as it was formerly in my unregenerate days, *but sin that dwelleth in me;* and to my shame before God, both hath too much power over me, and is not opposed, watched, and prayed against, as it ought.

Ver. 21. To be very express and open, and to explain myself fully: the result of what I have been observing is, that *I find then*, by woful experience, an evil principle in me, which, for its autho-

ritativeness in giving its orders, and for the seemingly interesting sanctions of present ease, interest, and enjoyment, wherewith it would enforce them, I may well call *a law*. I say, I *find* in me *a law, that when I* fain *would do good*, that which is pleasing in the sight of God, and conformable to his law, *evil is present with me:* at that very time when I would be doing good, this vile principle is so near me, that some bad motion too often presents itself immediately to oppose and hinder my acting up to, and accomplishing, the unfeigned desire of my heart, and leads me into one or another transgression unawares.

Ver. 22. *For* of this I am perfectly satisfied, that *I delight in the law of God in the inner man;* that in the higher faculties of my soul, which, alas! were once but darkness, obstinacy, and alienation from every thing good, I do now most sincerely approve of, and take the greatest satisfaction and complacency

in, all the demands of the law, spiritual and large as they are; and also honestly and earnestly wish to be conformed to them.

Ver. 23. *But*, alas! as I am still in an imperfect state, so *I see another* and contrary *law in my members;* I find a remaining principle of corruption, which has a powerful influence like a law in my sensitive passions and appetites, and by them is *warring* continually *against the law of my mind;* against the holy and approved light and choice of my judgment and will, which, like a superior law written in my heart, has the stated direction of me; *and* sometimes, when I am left to myself, and am under the power of temptations, *bringing me into captivity*, at such seasons, *to the law of sin, which is in my members*, chiefly operating in and by my bodily members.

Ver. 24. This is a deplorable consideration; it is my heaviest burden, and most distressing grief, that I cannot per-

form and attain unto what I delight in, by reason of this sinful nature of mine. *O wretched man*, vile and miserable, *that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* who shall set me free from this body of sin, which I still carry about with me, and which in its dreadful consequences, deserves and tends to death and ruin?

Ver. 25. *I thank God*, I am already delivered by his free favour, and the operation of his grace in me, from the guilt and dominion of this sin: and am waiting for full deliverance from it, at the dissolution of this mortal frame, *through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then*, to sum up all in a few words, *in my settled jndgment and choice*, as I am renewed by grace, *I myself*, with full approbation and consent, *serve the law of God*, yielding myself up to it unfeignedly and unreservedly, without objecting to any part of it: *but with the flesh*, as there are workings of corruption in

me, as I am sometimes brought into sin by them, and always so holden and restrained by their power, that I cannot do the things that I would, even so in this respect I must be said also to serve *the law of sin.*'

From this passage, thus explained, we will now make some reflections.

1st. More directly with the point undertaken to be proved, we see here, that the children of God are not so renewed in this world, as to have no remainders of sin in them, to be set free of corrupt nature, its workings, its general influence to restrain from a perfect conformity with the law of God, and its too successful attempts in certain cases. Another Apostle, St. John, saith in like manner, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' And a third, St. James, 'In many things we offend all.' There is a filthiness of the flesh, and a filthiness of the spirit; the one or both of which are mixing in all we do, spoil-

ing more or less the purity of our intentions, and the simplicity of our aims and ends; and, therefore, *for which* every one needs purging and refining. What can be stronger than the expressions we have been hearing from the mouth of the Apostle, 'I am carnal, sold under sin: the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do; I find a law in my members, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin?' Or, what more explicit than the cause he assigns for all this, *sin* that dwelleth in me, *which* he represents as the malignant cause of the manifold complaints he had to make? And how expressly does he describe this accursed principle, styling it "sin dwelling in him, the flesh in which dwelleth no good thing, the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind?" From hence I conclude,

2d. That whoever does not find impure mixtures and dross in his soul and services, has as yet to learn the spiritua-

lity of God's law, and the corruption of his own nature; consequently, the whole work of true repentance. This was the case with the Pharisees. Christ describes one of them in this very character, to represent the rest, as also all blind Pharisees to this day. Take up the words of St. Paul I have been reading; don't you understand, have you not experience of the truth of what he says, 'The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin; for that which I do, I allow not; what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. In my flesh dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not; for the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members?' Don't you understand these words? Don't you find what they mean, by your

own heart and experience? There are no words in the Bible plainer to a regenerate soul; yet you are at a loss to enter at all into their meaning; therefore you know nothing of the law, or yourself: and if you mean to become a Christian indeed, you must begin by making a diligent search into the one and the other. But,

3d. If you have understood these things, and find corruption in you, and can talk never so well of its various contentions and workings; that will not prove you to have grace in your heart, and to be a regenerate soul: there may be much light in the understanding, and that may beget a great stir in the conscience, when, nevertheless, there is no change wrought on the will and affections. Wherefore, you should consider, that, while the Apostle here describes a regenerate person as having much sin and corruption, and that but too apt to gain some advantages upon him; he does

at the same time set him out, as having a will to do good, as hating evil, as delighting in the law of God in the inner man, as warring against the law of sin in his members, as groaning under it as the most heavy and intolerable burden. Now, not one of these things is the case of an unregenerate man; no, not with the highest measure of light in his understanding, or the most reproving pangs of guilt in his conscience. Such cannot say, they have a will to do good, and hate evil; that they delight in the law of God in the inner man; or, that they penitently groan under the body of sin. And this matter should be much noted; for, when people have heard a great deal of the spirituality of the law, and of the corruption of their own nature, which you know is your case, and are grown up to some degree of acquaintance with these points, they may be apt to stop short of conversion; and that especially, if, as is mostly the case, what has been

heard about the law and the Gospel has produced some awakenings of conscience, and they find some outward reformation and profession; wherefore we should make full proof of a real change wrought upon us, through faith in Jesus Christ. How shall we do this? The answer is the—

4th. Use we may make of the passage before us. You may try yourself, whether you be in the faith stated in the passage before us; in order to which you will take notice, that here are represented the struggles between grace and nature in a regenerate soul. In relating this conflict, two contrary principles are brought before you, as both dwelling in the regenerate; which he expresses by two, that is, his natural and renewed self, which as two persons of different characters are dwelling in him. Concerning his renewed self, he says, that he habitually and determinately consented to the law that it is good, delighted in it

after the inner man, served it with his mind, and consequently disallowed and hated the evil that he did. Yet, at the same time, he confesses concerning his natural self, that he was carnal, and sold under sin, brought into captivity by the law of his members, and served the law of sin with the flesh. Is there any contradiction here? No. It must be thus, while two such different principles as grace and sin dwell together. When we talk *of* a Christian, we are wont to conceive a perfect character; when we talk *with* him, we find him the very thing here described; a person in whom the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The question is not, whether I am perfect, but, whether I am regenerate? And so, not whether I have no corruption in me, but whether I have grace in me, warring against corruption, and in the general course overcoming it? How shall I know that? you will say. I find that the good I

would do, I do not; and again, that the evil, which I would not do, I too often do; and this makes me doubt my conversion. But do you really find this? What, do you really find you would do, with all your soul, the good you do not, and so would not do the evil you do? Then it is plain God has given you a will; and in that case, I dare answer for you, you can say also, you consent to the law that it is good, and delight in it in the inner man, and serve it with the mind: and beyond these expressions, rightly understood, I know none more eminently descriptive of a gracious state in the whole Scriptures. Take this passage into the nearest consideration. Have you the complaints of the regenerate man here described? that is no ill token. But can you adopt too his dispositions and conduct? then it is manifest you cannot be mistaken; and, by the way, it looks to me as if the Spirit had designed this passage for the relief of tender and doubting minds.

Lastly, I will conclude the whole with this observation on those impassionate words, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (not only from the guilt of it, but from the power it has in me;) that they are peculiarly significant of a gracious heart that loves holiness, and hates sin: and so the Spirit signified by them the best preparation for growth in grace, or for receiving the blessed operation of the Great Head of the Church, 'who sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; to purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.'

# SERMON II.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

THREE things were before observed in this Scripture.

1st. That God's children have impure mixtures and dross in them.

2d. That Christ sits over them, to purge and to purify them from the same.

3d. That, finally, when he has done his work upon them, 'they shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.'

Of the first of these points, that there are impure mixtures and dross in God's

people, I spoke to you when we last met, setting before you in a general manner, that the corruption of our nature remains in the regenerate. And it was not needful to be particular then, because, under the second point, we shall have large opportunity of being so. Wherefore,

2dly, We are now to consider Christ in the execution of this office, purging and purifying his people. And here it will be needful to speak to these several points following:

1. What we are to understand by his purifying and purging his people.

2. That it is the office of Christ to do this.

3. That he is perfectly qualified for it.

4. What means he uses in doing it.

5. How he doeth it.

If the consideration of these matters should engage your attention for a season, I hope the importance of them will be my sufficient vindication; and I pray God to enable me so to speak, and you

so to hear, that this labour may not be in vain.

1st. What we are to understand by his purifying and purging his people. Now inasmuch as purging and purifying metals is the cleansing them from dross and impurities that cleave to them, and are mingled with them, till they are brought out separate, clean, and pure: so, in allusion hereto, the purification of men's souls must consist in a purging away from them more and more by successive operations that sensual, earthly, and devilish, filth that is about them, till they be brought out in original purity. By means of the fall, the soul of every man by nature is altogether dross and base metal; it has no gold nor silver, no goodness in it. In man's flesh dwelleth no good thing; but the whole man is dead in trespasses and sins. And, though in regeneration there be spiritual life put into the soul, and a real, vital, and powerful principle of holiness; yet

it dwells with corrupt nature, and consequently all the actions of the soul have a mixture of that corrupt principle in them: this sinful nature remains, I say, and has still an influence always mingling itself in every thought, word, and work; and, through our want of watchfulness, and neglecting to stir up the grace that is in us, not unfrequently taking the reins, and directing us in too many instances, so that the best men in the world may say with David, 'Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' for I see evidently, that 'the good that I would I do not,' in the perfection and purity I ought and wish; and too often 'the evil that I would not, that I do.' Now, therefore, the work of purification is the continual purging away the bad mixtures of corrupt nature; lessening the influence of that malignant principle also, or, in Scripture terms, 'putting off the

old man, and crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts:' but you must take notice, that this purging away of corrupt nature is affected by the quickening, strengthening, and exalting the principle of grace, which acts on the other part in the regenerate soul; for nature and grace are two opposites continually at war, and what the one gets the other loses; they are like day and night that cannot subsist together, and the one of which puts out the other. Grace in the heart is compared in the Scripture to the light breaking in the morning, and so shining brighter and brighter till it become perfect day; but till it is come to that, darkness has some influence; for it is perfect day only that puts darkness quite out--First, there is a little dawn in the east—that is grace showing itself after regeneration amidst a multitude of corruptions; then, the light increases, and darkness seems flying away to the west: so grace advances,

and corruptions decay—this is the state of the regenerate man here upon earth. But, at last, the sun gets up to the midst of the heavens, and no darkness remains any where in the sky—and this is the state of glory, when corruptions shall be all done away.

Now, this comparison serves well to illustrate the matter before us, both setting out the two extremes, the dark night of a *natural state*, and the perfect day of *the state of glory*, and also explaining how that it is only the rising and advance of grace in the soul, which puts out corruption, till finally the whole soul be perfected after *God's image*, and all corruption done away. And now you see what is meant by purification; it is the daily recovery of the soul from its spiritual death; the mortification of nature by the growth of grace, till grace is made perfect, and corrupt nature utterly done away. That will not be indeed till the body is laid in the grave, and the soul is

admitted to the immediate vision of God; yet it is carrying forward in this life, and would be more forwarded, did not the slothfulness and negligence we are too apt to fall into, hinder it.

But, 2dly, It is the office of Christ to purge this, and purify his people. This is most evident from the words of the text, where he is represented as one who is set over his people as the refiner over his metals, who examines them with diligence, discerns the impure mixtures that are in them, determines the most effectual methods for cleansing them, addresses himself to the work, putting them into the fire, and continues the operation till they come out perfectly clean. So he is spoken of, Eph. v, 25: 'Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but

that it should be holy, and without blmish.' And so again, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, 'Waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And also in the Benediction of St. Jude, 'Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.'

Now, what has made me move this to you so particularly, and give it a distinct head by itself, is, that those who are much burdened by the striving of corruptions, may be encouraged in the consideration, that it is the very office of Christ to purify their hearts, and to purge away the dross that remains in them. He that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, now sits over us in heaven, to refine us as gold and silver; and will he forget, will he cast off his people for whom he died?

He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. True; you are far from perfection, and you have abundance of sin in your hearts; you are exceedingly selfish; the world has great power; and your flesh is a mighty adversary: but look back; what were you in former days? Did not corruption carry all before it? Had divine and spiritual things any weight? In your natural state you were even dead in trespasses and sin; did you then complain of corruption? was it your grief that you were so far from God? But who hath brought you out hitherto? Was it your own strength, or was it for any thing good in you, that the Lord thus blessed you? May you not look on the present state of your soul, even poor as it is, and surveying the purposes, the desires after God and duty, the faith, the hope, the shame, the sorrow, that dwells in you, may you

not say in the language of the Prophet, 'Who hath begotten me these?' And must you not answer to yourself, It is the Lord; it is he has wrought all these works in me: and, when you do thus answer, can you help suggesting to yourself, 'He hath begun a good work in me; he is faithful; he will perform, perfect, and complete it unto his day;' and this the rather when you consider—

3dly, That he is perfectly qualified for this office. Now, his qualification lies in these three things: 1st, his skill; 2dly, his power; 3dly, his care. Neither of these three must he want, if he be fit for his work. A refiner of metals must have skill, must be acquainted with the quality of his metals, the nature of the base mixture, the method and manner of separation; he must have power, a principle that will forcibly disunite the metal from the dross, enter into and pass through the whole mass, break in pieces the union, and bring out the metal into

a separate state. Withal he must be diligent, sit over his operation carefully, have his eyes to his fining-pot, and take heed that he do not go to work so violently as to injure the metal, whilst he is consuming the dross. And I say, Christ is so qualified for purifying the hearts of his people: for he is God manifest in the flesh; and therefore can want no qualification for this work: as—

1st, He has skill for it. This he must needs have, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and if he possesses these infinite treasures, he must needs know the plague of our hearts what it is, the subtleties of corruption, the strong hold on which sin leans, the devices of Satan and every other adversary, together with the most effectual methods of mortifying corruption, strengthening grace, disappointing the devices of our spiritual enemies, and of making every thing work for his people's good and advancement. Take

notice of that passage, 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' How comes that about? Why, Christ knows how to make his advantage of every thing for them; and so all things, without exception, work for their good. There is not the least circumstance, but he orders it so as to make it influential to the mortifying some sin, to the exercising and quickening some grace; nay, and by his wise Providence he does so suit the circumstances to the case of his people, that they are always in that very condition which is exactly best for promoting their purification. If this be true, and we are desiring purification of heart, shall we direct Infinite Wisdom to the methods that are best fitted for effecting it? If not, why are we so displeased and uneasy at the methods used with us? St. Paul, like a truly humbled soul, who thought his Lord knew what was fit for him better than himself, says, in regard of the profit he manifestly re-

ceived by his manifold troubles, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day:' the weakening of the one was the strengthening of the other; and therefore he adds this as the reason why he fainted not under so great tribulations, 'for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' It would be a sovereign support under all the changes and chances of this life, to look on them in this view. How can that soul be discouraged or discomfited in any case, which sees that very case administered to him for his advantage and advancement in holiness and greater fitness for glory? It cannot be, that a soul that loves God, and hungers after righteousness, should be discouraged, whilst that soul sees evidently, that its trouble is dispensed by Infinite Wisdom, in order to purification: wherefore, when we complain and faint under trials and troubles,

it is either because we prefer present ease to growth in grace, and would be better pleased to be quiet than holy (which is a very ill sign of a regenerate heart;) or because we are not steadfastly believing that that trial is sent us to promote our spiritual good.

2dly, As Christ does not want skill, so neither does he want power to purge and purify the hearts of his people. This is plain from that one text (and there are many others to the same purport,) 'God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to his Church:' his power, therefore, is universal; it reacheth over all things; and, whatever his power be over all things, you see the design of it; it is to rule the Church, for the benefit of his people. Here, then, you see Christ has a power absolute over every creature; and if so, not one of them can move a step without him. When he permits Satan to go, he may; but when he bids

him stop, there is no going for him any farther. It is the same thing by every other creature; all things are not only under his direction, but absolutely receive their whole power of doing any thing from him. Now, therefore, he has all things visible and invisible under his hand whereby to work upon his people; and every creature must exactly answer his designs; because no creature can act at all without his power, nor go a jot farther than his permission reaches, so that no case can be too hard for him; and every thing must work together for the good of his servants, since He who has all power in heaven and earth *will* have it so. Take one instance of his power this way, and that a glorious one: it was needful that himself, in his manhood, should be made perfect by sufferings; it is not meant that he should be perfected in holiness by them, for that he was before, but that by sufferings he should perfect our salvation. To effect

this, men, devils, Jews, Gentiles, governor, soldiers, people, are all let loose. You may well think how busy Satan was with the hearts of the rest upon this occasion: there was murder in view, and it was the murder of one whose integrity he could never seduce, and whose life was the greatest check Satan had ever received upon earth; he would gladly, therefore, have him out of his way, for, no doubt, he persuaded himself, if Christ were once fairly dead, he should trouble him no longer. Stirred up by the malignity of this wicked spirit, what a rage possessed the whole people of the Jews! Nothing would satisfy but blood—'Crucify him, crucify him!' So they nailed him to the cross, and hereon he yielded up the ghost; hereby he was made perfect: every thing, you see, was made to serve his design; even his enemy of earth and hell. He must be made perfect—How shall this be done? Why, devils and men shall work together to make

him so. Oh, how, think you, did Satan bite his chain, when he saw what he had done!

It is agreed, then, that Christ has power to purge and purify the hearts of his people: it is agreed in speculation, but is it so in practice? judge ye every one for himself. What! hath faith always supported you, that he is able to keep that you have committed to him until that day? In all your struggles with sin and temptation, were you never dismayed? Did you never think it was too hard for you, and that you should not be able to endure? Especially did your heart never fail, when you were considering the length of the way, and the vastness of the work? Where, then, was your steadfast belief of Christ's power to keep your soul? Remember now what the Apostle saith, 'I know that he is able to keep.' The first thing that you should have before you in all actings of faith, is Christ's power. The belief of

that is most difficult, and yet the most needful for us: we fancy we believe he is able; but no sooner doth an accusation of conscience arise, but we shrink under the sense of guilt; and no sooner a temptation besets us, than our souls give back within us. In the one case as well as the other we are mistrustful of the power of Christ; and therefore nothing is of more importance to our peace and progress than to be certainly assured, that God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all things to his Church.

3dly, The care of Jesus is equal to his skill and power. We take a wrong view of Christ, if we do not consider him in his exalted state, in the merit of his obedience unto death, set down at the right hand of God, and from thence dispensing the glorious blessings which he has to bestow. There he sits to receive returning sinners, and to confer upon them pardon and acceptance with

God; and there he sits also dispensing the needful blessings of the sanctifying Spirit. As a King, under whose feet all things are put, he sits in heaven defending and governing his Church. It is an exalted living Head. You must thus consider Christ, from the throne of his glory administering his offices towards his people: in this manner he seems to be represented in the text—as sitting over his work, and refining and purifying his people. His care in this respect is manifest: he does not suffer the gates of hell to prevail against his Church; he does not suffer his believing people to be tempted above that they are able; out of his fulness he distributes to them grace for grace. He says of his Church, by Isaiah, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day.' And the Prophet, in another place, speaking of the affectionate care Christ takes of his people, expresses it in this tender

manner: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young;' and yet again with more tender sentiments, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee.' These are scriptures which abundantly express Christ's care of his people, while at the same time they assure us, that that care is laid out in watching over, keeping, feeding, and leading them on in the way of life.

Thus you see how perfectly qualified Christ is for his work of purifying his servants. He is skilful, mighty, and careful. Happy they who are under his discipline! they go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God; they are training up for glory: day by day additions are made to their meetness for the inherit-

ance of the saints; happy are the people that are in such a case! Ah, my brethren, that we were all of that number, sin dying with our days, and grace growing as we come nearer our end! The Lord of his mercy grant us all to seek the things that belong unto our peace, before they are hidden from our eyes!

# SERMON III.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

AFTER having observed and shown, that the people of God, while they are in this world, have still remainders of the dross of corruption and sin, which they need to be cleansed from, as well as to be made perfect in grace and holiness; we proceed to remark, that Christ is represented in this passage as sitting over them to purge and purify their hearts and nature from such bad mixtures.—Here these several points were proposed:

1st, What we are to understand by his purifying and purging his people.

2dly, That it is the office of Christ to do this.

3dly, That he is perfectly qualified for it.

4thly, What means he uses in doing it.

5thly, In what manner he does it.

In speaking to the three first of these points, it has been made appear, that as purification is the continual renewing of the soul nearer to the image of God, and thereby mortifying and subduing more and more the power and influence of corrupt affections; so it was the office of Christ thus to purge and purify the hearts of his people; and that he was not without that wisdom, power, or care, which are absolutely necessary for effecting it; wherefore—

4thly, Let us now consider by what means he carries on his work of purification. Now, seeing by whatever means a servant of God is improved in any

grace, or enabled to get ground upon a corruption, those means, in the view wherein the matter now stands before us, must needs be understood as an instrument by which the great Redeemer works. All things must be understood as means used by him in purifying the soul, for it is said expressly, that 'all things work together for good to them that love God;' which nevertheless they do not in any other way but in a spiritual sense. But seeing it would be endless to take the large compass to which the consideration of the subject in this extensive light would lead us; and seeing also our views seem to be confined within much narrower bounds in the words that immediately go before those of my text—'Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like the fuller's soap;' where he is represented as causing all to pass through the fire, both that the faithful

may be distinguished from the hypocrite; and also, doubtless, that by the fiery trial the believer may come out more clean; I say, seeing all this, we may content ourselves with confining our thoughts to sufferings, as the means used by Christ in purging and purifying his people. And that we may enter into the consideration of sufferings as means of our purification with more discernment, it will be advisable to mention two things here, regarding the manner how sufferings work purification; though they fall, indeed, under the next head; and from both you may see the tendency which sufferings have to promote spiritual purity, and also may be better prepared for what is to be more fully said concerning them, when we come to describe particularly how they are made to work for our purification. The

1st is, That sufferings become effectual to purification, by bringing out and making evident the corruptions of the

heart, and the strength and power they have there, which, before such sufferings, where not suspected. We are exceedingly apt to mistake ourselves; and, before we are tried, we fancy we have little of this or that lust in us, and that we should succeed tolerably well, were we brought into such or such circumstances; were we reduced to poverty, how patient we would be, and contented; were we sick, how resigned; were we injured, how forgiving! But, when the suffering comes that is suited by Christ to the purpose, then the mistake appears and corruption shows itself more formidable than it was thought of; upon which discovery, the gracious heart (an infallible sign of which is, to hate sin more than suffering) sets itself against it, and by the power of the Spirit, rendering the suffering effectual, and given in answer to earnest prayer, the lust loses its force, and the soul gains advantage over it. This is the first thing regarding

the manner how sufferings become effectual to purification. The

2d is, That, by suffering, the soul is stirred up to more lively exercises of grace, and thereby gains strength in it. Sufferings force the too sluggish believer to renewed exercises of humiliation, faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness: for, in sufferings, as the religious soul sees no help but in God, so is it necessitated to come to him with special importunity. 'When I am in heaviness I will think upon God; when my heart is vexed I will complain;' 'out of the depths have I called unto thee, O Lord.' And, as in suffering there must needs be a general exercise of grace in the soul's resigning to God, so, according to the special nature of the suffering, there will be a peculiar exercise of some grace more than another, which is particularly called upon in such sufferings, whether it be humility, or patience, or meekness or contentment; and hereby the soul advances

in strength of grace through the Spirit. You see by this time, what very signal means and seasons of purifications are sufferings; gentle methods, it seems, will not always do with us, and therefore we are often put into the furnace of sufferings; and surely, when we see from whom they come, what good they are designed to do us, and what good we may actually receive by them if we will, we shall behave very sinfully, and much to our hinderance, by quarrelling with them.

Let us proceed, therefore, now to mention particularly what are those sufferings by which Christ works to the purging and purifying his people: and here, though all manner of sufferings are made effectual by the Head of the Church to this purpose; yet I will mention only such as appear to me in Scripture to have been made most instrumental to the purification of men's hearts.

1st, Christ by temporal calamities does often mortify the corruptions, and

purify and improve the graces of his people. We may see this in a variety of Scripture cases: David suffered much this way, and declares, that it was good for him to have been in trouble, that he might learn the statutes of the Lord. I see Abraham purifying in a succession of worldly difficulties; and Joseph in a pit and a prison; and the faithful of the children of Israel in Egypt, and the wilderness, and afterwards in the captivity; and Job on a dunghill; and Daniel in a den; and Paul and Silas in the stocks. I see God's people and dearest children (of whom the world was not worthy) lying at the doors of the rich covered with sores, mourning the loss of nearest and dearest relations, suffering shipwrecks, beholding their children crucified before their eyes. Nay, I hear of these things as more peculiarly the lot of the righteous; for I am told of the wicked, that they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like

other men: and what can I think is the design of this, but to do the servants of God some special good; to disengage their hearts from a vain world, and to draw them nearer to that blessed Being with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning; by worldly troubles to strengthen their spiritual grace, and to kill in them the love of this world, that they may more abundantly love a better.

We have all known affliction in one shape or another; either have felt the sorrows of a sick bed, or have waited by a departing child, or parent, or brother, or sister, or friend; and what have we found the present effect of such seasons of trouble? I will not ask the children of God how it has endeared their heavenly Father to them, and taught them a higher esteem for that kingdom and world where they shall sorrow no more; but I will ask those who have their portion in this life, what they have found the present effects of such pressing troubles?

What these feel on such occasions, may well serve to show how great a tendency afflictions have to purify the hearts of the children of God; and how effectual they must needs be to that purpose, under the conduct of the Holy Spirit. And say, ye children of this world, when ye have been committing a tender relative to the ground, or following a chosen friend and companion to the grave; say, when ye heard the awful words, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' and your eyes had no longer power to retain your tears; when you have been brought near to the confines of death yourselves, by some furious disorder, your life hanging in doubt, and all the lying kindness of your friends could not persuade you, that you were not laid at death's door:—in cases such as these, say, what you saw, and what you felt. What then was the world, and all that you had in it, all your wealth and possessions, and friends and enjoyments? what

comfort could you then take in them? what relief did they bring you? what then did you think of every earthly thing? For the time, you was dead to it all; so dead, that you thought you should never love it more. O for mercy! that was all the cry of your heart; for a little longer time, was all your suit. What! did you wish for time, that you might enjoy the world? No; all on that side was vanity; but that you might prepare to die, provide for your salvation, and obtain an interest in heaven. It is time indeed. But all this was like a morning cloud, and as soon vanished away. Time, or recovery, gave the world its wonted power; and you looked back on the scene I have been describing, as on some fearful dream that once discomposed your sleep. Yet you cannot forget it: and you must own there was somewhat in such seasons remarkably fitted to lead you to repentance and to God. And, if even you confess the blessedness of afflic-

tions, how much more the believing souls to whom they are sanctified? And why are they not sanctified to you? Why have you let the golden seasons, wherein you might have gathered fruit unto everlasting life, pass by you unimproved? Was that season sickness; and are you nothing the better for all you then saw and feared? of the world still? still the slave of pride or passion, covetousness or pleasure, ease or excess? And what! have you made a covenant with death, that you should never die? are you to be sick no more? or, when sickness next comes, and death draws near to take you from the world; are the one or the other to come in a more pleasing manner, that without pain, this without terror? Alas! my brother, the approach of them both will be the very next time incomparably more terrible; the remembrance of former sicknesses unimproved, and the views you had in them, will haunt your dying curtains,

and speak horror to your soul, which at that season, at least, you will be ill able to endure. Then you will cry out in the bitterness of your spirit, 'Ah! that I had hearkened to the voice of conscience, which spake so plainly and so loudly in former afflictions. Ah! that even then I had died! better then, than now with all the guilt of that abused visitation of God upon my head.' And your dying words will be, 'O tell my friends, beseech my companions from me, that they take immediate care of their souls!'

But with the righteous it is otherwise; temporal calamities are means of their spiritual improvement. We will spend the rest of the allotted time in stirring up these also to make due advantage of past afflictions. But will not this advice come too late? Past troubles, as they are gone, so is not the use of them gone also? No; old corrections may do us much good, rightly managed in our thoughts of them; as, for example, a right remembrance of them may excite

in us a lively sense of God's law towards us; may lead us to lively actings of repentance; may humble us for not making better use of them; may increase in our hearts the great duty of thankfulness; may render more practical our views of the uncertainty of life, and of the vanity of the world; and, distinctly considered, shew so many present enemies and dangers, as may animate us to the exercise of many special graces, to the performance of many special duties. In short, the wholesome remembrance of past troubles may be every way rendered so profitable, that I cannot but think our forgetfulness of them a principle occasion of our slowness of growth in grace. Now if you ask, How shall I improve by past afflictions? I answer—

1st. Recollect and bring before you the history of afflictive dispensations, as minutely and circumstantially as you can. Why should you not remember past corrections as well as past mercies?

Especially, when you have all imaginable reason to be satisfied from experience, that corrections are not among the least mercies. Recollect, therefore, what sicknesses you have been visited with; what afflictions you have met with in your circumstances; what troubles you have gone through in the loss of relations and friends; what disappointments in worldly things have fallen upon you; and what of these was ministered to you in the different stages of your life? in childhood, youth, manhood, and advanced years; together with the peculiar circumstances of such affliction; how you were brought into it; how long it continued; and in what manner it ended? Be at pains to digest in your mind the history of your troubles, and the circumstances of time and manner, as nearly as you can; for hereby you shall gain a great insight into the wisdom and love of God, in his afflictive dealings with you.

2dly, When you have your past troubles before you, endeavour to see what was the occasion of them. Now, you are fully sensible, that as God's hand was in it, and he does not willingly (and much less needlessly) grieve his children, try to discover what was God's design in them; and what that was, it is likely you shall be more able to see, now that Providence has, by what followed, opened to you the meaning of a correction, than you could well do when you were actually under it. Now, that you may the better enter into this enquiry, you must know that afflictions have mostly one of these three designs; either to bring God's children to repentance for some sin they have fallen into, as the three days' pestilence of the Israelites, to bring them to repentance; and also, David for his sin in numbering the people: or, secondly, to prevent some great snare to their souls they were running into, and in danger of: or, thirdly, to exercise and

strengthen grace, because of some trying circumstances they should be afterwards in; as was the case of Joseph, before his exaltation. Examining your afflictions by these three rules, you may come to some certainty about the reasons of God's visiting you: either you was in some sin, as pride, covetousness, sloth; and God meant to show it you, and bring you to repentance for it: or you were in danger by means of some circumstance of life you were going into, and God meant to stop you from entering into temptation: or God meant to make some use of you, you were not yet fit for; and therefore exercised you with some seasonable and suitable trouble. Now, besides the general design of correction, which is to humble us, increase faith and love, and engage us to live more above the world; besides the general, to search out the special design of every affliction in this manner, cannot but be exceedingly useful, inasmuch as hereby we shall

gain a peculiar insight into the case of our souls, what it has been, and thereby what it is; and, at the same time, an experimental proof of God's good-will towards our spiritual and eternal interest, vastly confirming to our faith. Having now the history of our corrections before us, and also seeing the design of them,

3dly, We must consider how it has been, and still is with us, regarding those things, in consideration of which we were afflicted. Therefore,

1st, How have we behaved concerning such sins as have brought at any time correction upon us, to cause us to repent of them? It will be a provoking thing, if we are still any how ensnared by them; and this so much the more, if we have been corrected more than once for them.

2dly, If we have been, and are aware of such corruptions and singular lusts as necessitated our heavenly Father to stop us from entering into such circumstances

of life, wherein we should have been more apt to gratify them: if we were of a slothful spirit, or if we were of an ambitious turn, and God checked us, respecting the one and the other, how has it stood, and how stands it now with us, regarding sloth and pride?

3dly, How have we behaved in such circumstances, places, stations, and callings, as God was preparing for us by corrections? whether humbly towards God and man, seeking God's glory, and studying to please him? From such inquiry, we may gain much matter of humiliation; and that which will put us upon the exercise of many present graces and duties. And this is the *last* thing to be done in making use of past corrections to present spiritual improvement.

Having learnt from the history of our correction, where the main strength of sin lies, where we are in most danger, and where is the stress of what God expects from us; I say, having learnt

this *from* our corrections, for God strikes where the blow is wanted, our business must be to watch and contend against such dangerous circumstances, and be diligent in such duties.

How far you have thus improved and profited by past troubles, judge ye. May that God who corrects us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, give his blessing to what you have heard, for his Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

# SERMON IV.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

WE are treating now of the means which Christ uses in purifying the hearts of his people: these we thought it advisable to confine to the head of sufferings; in which view I spoke last Lord's day of temporal calamities. I proceed now to lay before you, as a second means of purification used by the Head of the Church, the trouble of living in an evil world. And here a scene fruitful of trouble appears continually before the

gracious soul which is neither insensible to the sins nor the calamities of others, nor the dishonour done to God every day. Not to speak at present of what the good man often meets with, in his own person, from such an evil world, let us consider him now only as a spectator: it may be proper to open a little what he beholds, that ye may discern the affliction that arises to him from this quarter.

He sees a great deal of sin in the world; he can look no way but it meets him: the world he now lives in, is a world lying in wickedness. Does he read the history of past ages? and what does he find the general amount to be, but a succession of pride, ambition, selfishness, lust, covetousness, oppression, cruelty, treachery, and villany? Does he consider the present day, and find through the reach of his observations, that the face of the world is not still marked with the same characters? Self-interest he sees governing the world, and the

regards due to God and man, falling before it. Sin presents itself perpetually before him; he sees it in every place; he hears of little else but sin. Solomon had with much care, taken a view of mankind, which is laid before us in his Ecclesiastes; and which is a description of what the world was, and will be, under the guidance of an apostate nature. Hear his judgment upon it in the beginning of the fourth chapter, fixing only on a single point, that of oppression. 'I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold, the tears of those that were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which were already dead, more than the living which are yet alive; yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.' Solomon, you observe, was affected and afflicted

at the thoughts of universal sin; it carried him into a reflection exceedingly natural to a tender spirit; 'that it was far better to be out of this world than in it; and that, in this regard, the dead were better than the living; yea, he that had never been, better than either of them.' But, that you may see the foundation of Solomon's remark, and what it is in the sins of the world that makes them so great a matter of affliction to the children of God, I will mention three things which are the effects of this sin that is in the world, and which the pious heart taking into consideration is much grieved at the thoughts of.

1st. He is grieved at the dishonour done to God by the sin that is in the world. So you will find the people of God very singularly to have been, when the people in Moses' absence in the Mount, had made 'a molten calf.' How was the spirit of that good man moved as soon as he came nigh the camp, 'that he

saw the calf and the dancing; his anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount.' You will see the same spirit in Samuel, regarding the repeated sins of king Saul; and so in Elijah, when he boldly confronted all the priests of Baal: not to mention abundant expressions of it in the book of Psalms. But how strongly was this manifested in Paul and Barnabas, when the blind people at Lystra were about to do sacrifice to them? 'They rent their clothes, and ran in amongst the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things?' And so the same temper showed itself in St. Paul at Athens; 'his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the whole city given to idolatry;' or, as it is in the margin, 'full of idols.' Nothing comes so near the true beliver as the dishonour done to God in the world; as David expresses it, 'his zeal consumeth him, because his enemies (and he reckons God's enemies

to be his) have forgotten God's word.' Then also,

2dly, He is grieved for the present misery that sin brings with it; he feels for the helpless infant, incapable of expressing the pains itself feels, otherwise than by its helpless cries: he feels for the fatherless and widow; for those that labour under diseases of various kinds; for the poor that hath no helper: he feels for disconsolate parents and ophans who have lost the supports and guide of their youth; for those who lament a child or husband lost in war; for the prisoners and captive: he feels for the oppressed and injured by force and power; for the strife and contention, and various violence that every where abound. Not to multiply words, sin has made the world an hospital, and a scene of blood, and the seat of wrongs; and affords ample matter of affliction to the charitable Christian, who many times is ready to cry out, as unable to bear the misery

which sin continually sets before him,' O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest; lo! then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness.' Truly, the present evils attending the sin of Adam are so many, and these also are so enormously increased by needless evils, which the sin of one and another, the lust of some, the covetousness of others, the ambition of many, and the pride of more, produce, that no man who is not lost to the feelings of human nature, much less he whose heart is touched by the compassions of God in Christ, can possibly consider them without sensibility.

3dly, A world lying in wickedness, is an afflictive sight to the servant of God, because he knows the future ruin it will end in. St. Paul was carried into extremity of distress at the thoughts of the sad condition his unbelieving countrymen were in, which he expresses in a manner so awful, so deep, and astonish-

ing, that you and I may be well ashamed to think how little we feel over perishing souls. 'I say the truth in Christ,' says he, 'I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' The consideration of the miserable state of their souls, and the certain knowledge and belief he had of the approaching and eternal destruction of them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, begat in him a heaviness of spirit, which he most solemnly appeals to God was great, and such as filled him with continual sorrow. It is, indeed, a sensible grief which the children of this world, the sons and daughters of care, pleasures, and pride, beget in the heart of the child of God; they vex his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,

while they neglect to know the things that belong to their peace, and harden themselves more and more in the ways of endless damnation. Though he cannot prevail with them to repent, and so much the more because they will not be persuaded, he mourneth for them as the good Samuel did for Saul, whom God had forsaken and rejected from being king over Israel.

Upon all these accounts now sin makes this evil world an uncomfortable place to a real Christian. Sin is what he hates, and he sees so very much of it, and therewith so much shameful dishonour done to God, and so much misery, vexation, and violence brought forth by it every day; and withal, he is so horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake God's law, (what will become of them in another world?) that to live in an evil world, is not the least of his troubles, even what himself suffers from an evil world being not considered.

Having shown, that the living among evil men is a real affliction to the people of God, we are to consider it as a means of their purification. We fools are ready to complain, that the world is so bad, as if we should do better if it were not so; because then we think we should be rid of many temptations, which give too often corrupt nature advantages against us; and were there none but godly people in the world, how much benefit are we ready to imagine we should receive by their means to our souls? O what a happy thing, we have been ready to think, would it be, were one living in a place where there were none but those who loved God, believed in Jesus, and were waiting for the joy that shall be revealed! But Christ saith, 'Let the tares and the wheat grow together until harvest;' for while the good and the bad live together, not only do the bad enjoy the means of reformation, but the good a great means of improvement: and that

indeed an evil world is a great means of a believer's spiritual improvement, of mortifying his corruptions, and strengthening his graces, may be made appear by the following considerations.

1st, That the living in an evil world, is a great means of trying and exercising faith. Were you in a world where there were none but regenerate people, you would be apt to mistake yourself, to fancy you had more faith than you really had; and so when the last great enemy death should come upon you, to be discouraged; but when, as it is, you live in an evil world, you see sin abounding and your faith tried by all the force which custom and countenance can give; when you are often put to reflect, what God will do with all this world of sinners in another life; when you see the ungodly many times in great prosperity; when you find the number of real Christians to be very small, and are daily convinced, they are, in truth, but a little flock, as you

advance more into the knowledge of the truth, and strictness of a Gospel state; when, finally, you observe many who had made a good appearance of being Christians failing and falling off: all this brings out the natural unbelief of our hearts; proves whether your foundations be well laid; puts you to seek the grounds of true faith; and, forcing you continually to the most vigorous exercises of this grace, confirms you in it. Thus you may see the faith of the Psalmist (Psal. iii.) exercised and improved. Doubtless, he was not aware of the weakness of his faith, till the prosperity of the wicked was in some singular manner brought before him; then his heart misgives him; his feet were almost gone; his steps were well nigh slipt; he began to grow envious at the foolish, when he saw how easy, happy, secure, and even insolent they were; well, what does this drive him to? to the sanctuary of God; he betook him-

self to the ordinances; and, then, by God's statutes, his eyes were opened; he saw the end of these men; his faith gained strength, and he was helped, over a great stumbling-block, into a more steadfast belief of the promises of God. And so St. Peter alleges this, as the reason of his stirring up the minds of those he was writing to, unto a remembrance of the words of the Prophets and Apostles, 'that there would be scoffers walking after their own lust, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' And hereby he sufficiently intimates, both that the conduct of such evil men should be a trial of their faith, wherein they might be ready to stumble; and yet, that, by their remembering the words of the Scriptures, it should be a means of confirming them.

2dly, Living in an evil world, is a great means of mortifying the love of life, and engaging the affections to things above. Such as the world is, and full

of sin as it is, we are but too fond of it. What then would be the case were the world just to our wish, and every one about us just what we desire? Do we know, that we have a love of this present world in us? What can convince us of it in so striking a manner, as that we are yet unwilling to leave the world, though we see nothing but sin in it? and when we thus see the love of the world that remains, what so suited to mortify it, and to engage us to the search of better and higher things, as the very sight of the world itself? In fact, the sinfulness of the world has this effect upon the gracious heart. When you reflect upon the wickedness that is done under the sun, and by peculiar circumstances it is brought home to you; you may find an edge put upon your desires after God, and the new world wherein dwelleth righteousness. Your soul grows sick of this dungeon, and sink of iniquity; and you loath yourself, that you

have any value for things on earth. Your soul cries out, like David in the wilderness, 'My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and glory.'

3dly, Living in an evil world, is a special means of mortifying self-will, and improving meekness. Were all of that temper and conduct they ought to be, humble, obliging, and condescending; think you, would this mortify, or indulge self-will? Or how then should we learn meekness? Yea, how could it be exercised? How then should we sadly deceive ourselves, and, while we enjoyed our own will, be forward to think there was no such thing as guilt in us? But an evil world shows what spirit we are naturally of; brings us one way and another perpetually to the test; drags out the lurking desire of having our own way; and becomes an eminent means of teaching us a gentle and quiet

spirit. Think you, Moses had gained much lengths in the spirit of meekness, had he not been conversant with such a stubborn people as Israel? All their murmurings were but means of his watching over his heart, and, through grace, of his gaining greater victories over himself.

4thly, An evil world is a great means of mortifying selfishness, and increasing Christain love. Were all about us righteous, we should never see the selfishness of our souls; for love would then only take the pleasing way of joy over saints; and because we were greatly pleased, we should imagine we had much of love. But the best proof of love in this world, is in compassion towards sinners, if we may judge by the love of Christ; and how little we have of that, how short we fall in compassion towards souls, a world lying in wickedness plainly convinces us; we see how little we love by the little we feel, and the less we do,

for the greatest objects of compassion, sinners led captive by the devil at his will; the frequency of the object increases the self-reproof, and begets a louder cry for Christ-like pity. Self appears still to be behind, by the coldness of our endeavours and prayers; and this increases our importunity for renewing grace; and that forms the heart into a growing temper of love. I might show you in other instances, how a sinful world is a means of the beliver's purification; but what you have heard, are abundantly sufficient for the purpose; as also to reconcile us to our lot in a sinful generation, as well as to engage us to admire the wisdom of God in all, and to be sensible of his inexpressible love, which makes the sins of others turn to our advantage.

# SERMON V.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

We are treating now of the means Christ makes use of to purify his people from the remainder of corruption, strengthening by them, and building up the power of godliness. Sufferings of every kind were shown to be his special instruments in this work; that as the refiner puts his precious metal into the fire, and there tortures it, as it were, to purge it from the dross, so Christ does by his beloved people; he often brings them into the furnace of afflictions, and

there cleanses away their impurities, sanctifying their hearts. I have already endeavoured to show, first, that temporal calamities; secondly, that a world lying in wickedness, wherein the people of God are constrained to live, are means of their purification; and I proceed now to a third means, by which Christ purifies his people; and this is persecution. In speaking to this, it is necessary.

1st, To observe what is meant by persecution. To persecute, is to pursue and hurt another in word or deed, by fraud or force, secretly or openly, for religion or righteousness' sake. The nature of persecution lies not in the measure of the suffering, but in this; that what is suffered, be it great or little, is for the sake of religion. So that persecution is not confined to taking away the life, or to some great spoiling of goods or estate, for then the word of God should not be true, 'that all who

would be godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;' seeing, doubtless, many that have never been called to these more interesting trials, who, nevertheless, for the sake of a good conscience, have one way or other been made partakers of the sufferings of Christ; whether by reproach or ridicule, or being treated as the filth and off-scowering of the world: yet, on the other part, let no man think he is persecuted, if, by the humour and invention of his own brain, or, in short, by any thing he undertakes without the warrant of God's word, he brings upon himself troubles. It is only when, by refusing to hearken to men, rather than to God, we bring them upon us, that we may be said to suffer persecution.

2dly, I observe, that persecution, in one shape or other, is the lot of all God's children in this world. This appears most expressly from the Scripture before alleged, '*All*, of whatever age or country, that will live godly in Christ Jesus,

shall suffer persecution.' Which, in fact, has been true from the beginning of the world; as appears throughout the Scripture history, from Abel to the time of Christ and his Apostles: and as it is assured to have been the case in the days of Abraham and those of the Apostles. 'As then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit; even so it is now.' It would indeed, at first sight, seem strange, that not a single soul should be able to serve God faithfully, without bringing the world upon him for it; for then you will be ready to say, Is the world so wicked as to hate others only for loving God, especially when their love of God brings upon the world no manner of damage? The truth is, the world, however wicked, is not so foolish as to own it hates any only for serving God; nay, for the most part knows not it hates them for that reason; but their natural enmity against God, desperately rising up at the sight

of any who are like him, and moving their heart to displeasure against them, finds some colour or other of blame in them, under which the malignity of the heart screens itself even from the observation of those it possesses, takes hold of it eagerly, and sets itself to discourage and persecute such 'troublers of Israel, without itself suspecting, perhaps, the real cause of such disaffection in the heart; nay, possibly imagining that what it does, is for God's service. 'Because I have taken you out of the world, therefore, for that reason and no other (whether the world know it, or not,) doth the world hate you.' So that there is such a foundation for persecution in the heart of fallen man, that what is instanced by Scripture example, and determined by Scripture declaration, is also manifest from the very state of apostate man; and, unless the whole world should become godly, to suffer

for righteousness' sake must be the lot of the children of God.—But,

3dly, It must be observed farther, that all their sufferings are in the hand of God. God does not give up his children to be a prey unto the rage of a blind world: he lets the world loose upon them in measure, and always under his own direction: and even when he does thus suffer them to be tempted, it is always as they can bear, himself always standing by, and making them a way to escape. This doctrine Christ again and again insists upon; 'I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them who kill the body; are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered: fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.' And what he thus preaches, himself was an example of. 'Him,' saith Peter, in his first sermon to the Jews, 'being delivered by the

determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' Which was the very thing Christ himself declared to Pilate, 'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above.' But most amply is this doctrine declared in Isaiah: 'O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand, is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the street. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy.' It is true, God speaks here of his people when they were dealing insincerely with him, and so what they suffered, was in a way of wrath; but still it was to reform them. And if God deal thus with his people in their sins, how much more is it he that doth con-

trol all the rage of their persecuting adversaries, when they are indeed his dutiful children? Wherefore, if to suffer for righteousness' sake is the lot of God's children, and what they suffer this way is under his direction, it must needs follow,

4thly, That such suffering is a means of doing them good, of purging away their corruptions, and purifying and exalting their graces; and this it necessarily does in these four respects:

1. As, through the grace of God, it mortifies their love of worldly ease.

2. As it subdues the pride of esteem.

3. As it exercises their faith in God.

4. As it quickens in them the grace of hope.

1st. Suffering for righteousness' sake is a means of purification, as it contributes to mortify in the children of God their natural love of worldly ease. It is not only the unregenerate who have that desire of ease, which is so strongly

expressed in those words of our Lord, 'Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:' words, which in the full sense of them, and expressive as they are of a state, belong only to the children of this world; but yet do so far concern Christ's servants, as to describe a state which they also are too much inclined to. To have all about one obliging, agreeable, and ready to gratify our humours, to have nothing to trouble us, or put us out of our way, to be possessed at least of what we need, so as to be able to sit down quietly, and without being under obligation or difficulties; who will say (who, that knows any thing of his heart,) that this is not a state his heart would be still fond of, while yet he knows it would peculiarly tend to give him up to the present life? Our Church has taught us to fear in such circumstances, and to pray that God, in all times *of our wealth*, will vouchsafe to deliver us; that we may not forget ourselves, and grow

reconciled to the world in such easy circumstances. How much need there is we should thus fear and pray, is sufficiently plain, from the care, as we find in Scripture, which God has usually taken with his people by a variety of disappointments to preserve them from the infection of worldly ease. But no affliction seems so directly calculated to this purpose, because none so lasting, as the discountenance, the dislike, the displeasure of the world for righteousness' sake. Could such a one as St. Paul once think of worldly ease? and why not? Because he knew that every where tribulation did betide him. He had suffered much, he says; and was looking forward, expecting to fill up what was behind of the sufferings of Christ. A Christian must part with his ease: for the contrary temper and conduct of the world will not permit him to keep it: neither is it possible for him to hold on with Christ, without sacrificing a variety of things which make life easy to the

flesh; and without enduring such things from the world, as disappoint the love of ease, and render it less and less what he can ever hope for. The least thing that falls under the name of persecution, the very coldness of friends, and mockery or reproach, disconcert the plan of worldly enjoyments, and cause every expectation of it to be fruitless. Now, when such and such a trial is over, I shall be easy, is the believer ready to say: but, when experience has taught him that he has made a wrong calculation, and that still trials remain on the part of the world, the hope of present ease diminishes, and he becomes reconciled to the cross.

2dly, Suffering for righteousness' sake is a means of purification, as it mortifies the love of esteem. This, every one knows, who knows but a little of himself, is among the principal of those enemies which are within us, to the power and practice of true Christianity,

to love the praise of men, more than the praise of God: therefore, to be biassed in conduct, from what is strictly after God's will, to that which is of report in the world, is what we see daily, is what it is to be feared we all too much feel, and are in some degree influenced by. And, if it be thus with a Christian, while the world in affection and reproach is against him, what would it be, did his religion and worldly reputation grow together? and the better he was, the more esteemed and regarded? 'Woe unto you,' saith Christ, 'when all men shall speak well of you; for so did your fathers by the false prophets;' they preached to your fathers smooth things, and so got their good word; and you see Christ has no good word for him, but pronounces a woe upon such. Woe unto you! Why so? not simply because the world speaks well of you, but because you cause them to do so, by a conduct that is in conformity with the world. From whence it follows,

that when a man's conduct is not in conformity with the world, but he walks as Christ also walked, the world will not speak well of him: it will speak ill of him; he shall lose his worldly favours. But then, when hereby he gets the world's woe, he obtains Christ's blessing. 'Blessed are ye when men shall speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake; great is your reward in heaven,' in the kingdom of grace and that of glory. The reward in glory in such a case is manifest; but how in grace? Why, among other happy circumstances, nothing shall contribute more to mortify in you the desire of man's praise, and more engage you to seek the praise of God: when we see we cannot keep man's esteem with a good conscience, we shall be more ready to part with it, and the pride of reputation shall yield, as there is no maintaining it; and being inured to reproach, the soul will grow more content to suffer it.

3dly, Suffering for righteousness' sake, is a great means of exercising faith and trust in God, and thereby of purification. It is said, 'Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, and maketh man his help, and in his heart departeth from the Lord.' And this, indeed, is a word that comes very near us, both striking at the root of all worldly dependance, and condemning us bitterly as far as we trust in any but God. The words describe, in the strongest manner, the very heart of a worldling, which knows no other safety but in worldly supports. But, is the child of God so clean escaped from all worldly trust, as to live purely by faith? or, in this respect, doth he not pray his faith may be increased? We know God hears the prayers of his people: and how does he answer this prayer of theirs? Why, he permits them to suffer for his name sake. their reputation is taken away, their interest is struck at. What can they do?

there is no help for them but in God: they fly to him; every thing they suffer makes them do so: he gives them deliverance; or, which is better, he gives them comforts. So their faith in God strengthens by perpetual discipline, and worldly trust dies away. Suffering for Christ's sake, shows a man signally his worldly confidence, his dependence on the arm of flesh, his willingness to have somewhat in hand, and not to trust all to God, and the cleaving of his heart to the world. And as it shows him this, so it brings him to humble himself before God for his distrust, to cry for confidence in God, and, consequently, to grow more and more into living by faith.

4thly, Suffering for religion quickens the grace of hope. Where could an Apostle get comfort in persecution, but in the joy set before him? Or, do you judge St. Paul would have had his conversation so much in heaven, had it not been that his enemies forced him conti-

nually to look thither for present support? 'Our light affliction (saith he) which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' You see here where his eyes were fixed, and what it was that engaged him so attentively to have in view the heavenly kingdom. And you see farther, that, by many troubles, being repeatedly drove to consider his better hope, he was come to make little account of his indeed most heavy tribulations, to esteem them light, and to speak of them as if they were nothing. But, what, has God no other children but his Apostles? Such honour have all his saints. He puts them all into the furnace, suffers the world to rise up against them, and stirs up their sluggish souls, shows them they are not at home in the body, makes them sensible this is not their rest, leaves them little or no quiet, constrains them to be looking forward, convinces them we are but

strangers upon earth, forces them to seek the better country, 'more and more to fix their hearts on treasures that wax not old, that are eternal in the heavens,' and abundantly to expect and long after that new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

You may see by all this, how sufferings for righteousness' sake, are a blessed means of purification. And we may learn from it not to let our hearts faint, or our hands hang down in any case, 'seeing God so wonderfully ordereth all things, as to make all things work together for our good.' Well we may cry, 'O the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.'

# SERMON VI.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

AMONG the various methods used by the head of the Church, in cleansing and purifying his people, we have confined our views to the point of sufferings, as being more eminently made to serve this important purpose; in which light we have already considered temporal afflictions, the troubles that arise from living in an evil world, and sufferings for righteousness' sake. I pass on now,

4thly, To treat of temptations, as another special means of promoting sanc-

tification in the children of God. Temptation bears divers significations in the Holy Scriptures. One while it signifies God's tempting man; as it is said, he did Abraham, to prove and make manifest the grace that is in him. Other whiles, it signifies man's tempting God, either by distrust, which was the great sin of the Israelites in the wilderness, or by presumption, which was what the devil would needs have led Christ unto: 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.' Then, again, sometimes it signifies the suggestions of the devil; and at other times the enticements of our lusts. It is in the two latter senses that I purpose to speak of temptations, endeavouring to show you, that, by the suggestions of Satan, and the enticements of lust, there is occasion taken by Christ to do his people good. Now, here seeing it is most certain that the flesh is perpetually lusting against the spirit, by sending up its sinful motions

into the mind, and seeing also it is not less certain that the devil is alike busy, either working with, exciting, and inflaming the motions of concupiscence, or casting into the mind such monstrous thoughts as evidently enough show from what quarter they come; and which, nevertheless, can give the devil no advantage against us, any farther than they have influence to stir and excite some lusts of the flesh; I say, seeing these two enemies do work together in the matter of temptation, it will be improper to consider them so distinctly, as if in every temptation they had not both a share: and yet, seeing in some temptations the devil, and in others the flesh, bears the principal part, it is advisable not altogether to confound and mix them. But, while I am speaking of temptations, the method proposed confines me to those which are afflictive and grievous, and bring much trouble. And therefore, to speak of the subject in this

view, I must confine myself to a single point, *temptation to despair;* in which there is indeed a working together of the devil and the flesh: and yet (as the case is) sometimes the one, and at other times the other, seems to have the principal part.

Now, you will understand, that all temptations to despair work upon and by two special lusts of the flesh, pride and unbelief: the former of which by murmuring, the latter by doubting, gives occasion to impatience, discouragement, heartlessness, and despair. When pride and unbelief are set at working, whether by their own natural actings in certain cases of the soul, with a more covered attempt of the devil, or whether they be stirred up by a more bold and open assault of the adversary, then there is a temptation to despair. And what I have to show is, that Christ takes advantage of such very grievous temptations to do his people good, to mortify their corrup-

tions, and confirm their graces; which I suppose he does in a very signal manner by this very means, perhaps many times beyond any other, making use of this to stablish and advance his people. So unsearchable are the ways of God, that his worst enemies shall be made use of to help forward his work, by endeavouring to overturn it. O how happy, how safe, that soul, which is in the keeping of Christ!

Let us now mention a case or two of temptation to despair, in the view that lies before us. And,

1st, The faithful servants of Christ may sometimes be brought into much trouble of mind because of their sins; they can see nothing in them as they ought to be; they are so bad, so full of corruption, they do nothing at all as they should; they are exceedingly discouraged, their hearts faint within them, they have no hope of mercy present with their spirits, every thing seems

against them, neither doth there appear any way of escape. In this heaviness of spirit because of sin, there is a secret, but most stubborn rising up of self-righteousness, pride manifesting itself in various circumstances tending to despair; such as a kind of bitter anger at heart, that we are thus and thus; a sullenness like that of a person disappointed, because we cannot be what we would; a desperate wilfulness in complaining and refusing comfort, together with an aptness to fly in God's face, with a 'Why dost thou thus deal with me?' With these peevish and violent workings of pride, the devil joins in at the same time with all his force, heaping together all the accusations he possibly can upon the conscience, setting out every thing in the most discouraging light, and insinuating, that there is little prospect things will ever be better with the soul. Meantime, unbelief is also raging, deliverance seems hardly possible, all the means

of deliverance appear insufficient, so many things stand in the way, such guilt behind! The soul is ready to sink under the burden, almost determined to give all over for lost. In a word, at such seasons, all seems driving to despair, under the conduct of pride, unbelief, and Satan. And such seasons there are with many who are seriously seeking the salvation of their souls. Indeed, it does not appear how any can be safe from them, while pride and unbelief are in us all, and the devil is ready at hand to work with them. If we are not thus tempted and distressed, it is owing to the power and care of Jesus restraining the malice of the devil, as well as the rage of our lusts. Neither is it conceivable how a sincere soul should be free of this vexation, but by being kept in deep humility, and in lively exercises of faith. It is in the defect of these that many have been kept in the distress I have been describing, for years together; and

that some in peculiar circumstances have known inexpressible torment of mind under such temptations. This is one temptation to despair. And I will add to it one other, viz.

2dly, Horrid suggestions from the devil. Now, this is a temptation which has its force, partly in the same pride and unbelief, and partly in ignorance. The devil sometimes takes the soul in the advantage of the former temptation, and, when the mind is oppressed with the formidable apprehensions above spoken of, adds to them his own fearful suggestions, consisting of black and monstrous thoughts regarding God, and thereby urging farther to despair, and, when he can, to violent purposes. At other times, he avails himself of the ignorance of serious people, forces in upon their minds the most absurd and wicked imaginations, which they, either mistaking for their own thoughts, or taking to be their own sins, are misera-

bly affrighted at, and by them not unfrequently driven to a degree of distress, that robs them almost of their senses, and leaves them under inexpressible anguish and discouragement. It is pride, unbelief, and ignorance, by which the devil gets opportunity of casting in his black suggestions, and by them of raising such a storm of trouble in the soul, as none but those who are acquainted with it, can be aware of. Now, whether the devil do take hold of pride and unbelief already set at work in the heart, to graft his suggestions upon them; or whether he takes advantage of our ignorance to stir up natural pride and unbelief, and to set them to work the matter, it is nearly the same. Pride grows impatient, and weak faith lays little restraint upon it: so the soul is all in uproar, peace is quite banished, and every thing seems rushing to the very brink of desperation. Such are the temptations under consideration; in

which, however Christ be dishonoured by the hard thoughts, through pride and unbelief, conceived against his power or love, he does not forsake his poor distressed people, but still keeps their faith utterly from failing, while to their sense and feeling it is quite gone; most wonderfully supporting them they know not how, and exercising towards them such peculiar and critical dispensations of providence and grace, as to themselves are most astonishing, after a cool recollection. But is this all? Does he no more than preserve and support them? Think you he thus lets Satan, with his two blackest furies bred in hell, pride and unbelief, loose upon them without some gracious design? No; he makes this also many times, this especially, work for their good. How so? Why,

3dly, He takes occasion by these temptations very much to humble the hearts of those that are exercised by them. They grow more sensible per-

haps than any other person of their exceeding sinfulness, and are laid lower abundantly before God. They are peculiarly afraid of meddling with sin, and of the displeasure of God. They own, in a very experimental and practical manner, their own weakness and insufficiency, and are jealous of doing the least thing that might grieve the Holy Spirit, and provoke God to leave them to themselves. In a word, under these temptations, Christ has taught them to know what they are; and that pride, self-will, and independency, are not becoming in a creature.

4thly, By these temptations he takes occasion to show them the sinfulness of their unbelief, and to make them watch and pray against it. However terrified they were at their adversaries, and mistrustful of God's mercy, and power, and love towards them in the day of their trouble, they are not now less humbled and ashamed in the remembrance of their sinful doubt, fear, and impatience.

Nothing now appears to them so base, unworthy, and dishonourable to God, as unbelief. That they should treat God as a liar, that they should treat him as false and forsworn, that they should treat him as weak and forgetful, that they should murmur against him in the evil day, set up their will against his quarrel, and grow angry at his ways with them, and stubbornly refuse to wait his time, and submit to his methods of deliverance: these things are now their shame and grief.

He takes occasion, by these temptations, to let them see the pride and unbelief that is in them, which, if undiscovered, could neither be lamented nor mortified. Before this, they knew not they had so much pride and self-will in them, or did not well know what unbelief meant. These are deep spiritual iniquities in the soul, which lie far out of sight, and require some smart discipline to bring them out, and force

them to show themselves in their true colours, as the most obstinate and pestilent sins in the nature of fallen man. Before, such temptations, such pride, self-will, and unbelief, were not suspected; and the person thought himself on a tolerable footing respecting them. But when in such temptations they have made their true and proper appearance, and the effects of them have been found so exceedingly desperate, then their malignity and obstinacy are become manifest; the residence of them in the heart is noted: they are lamented, prayed against, and resisted, as the principal and vilest of all sins.

5thly, He takes occasion by these temptations abundantly to engage the hearts of those who have been exercised by them into an esteem and value of the Gospel. They have been taught to see by their troubles, 'that their help standeth in the name of the Lord who hath made heaven and earth,' that other help is all vain, and that there is but one

way for them, which is, to commit their souls to God, as to a faithful Creator. They have been taught the worth of Jesus by dear-bought experience; they see their all laid up in his hands; they are rejoiced to be in so safe keeping; they say, with transport of spirit, 'Who is he that shall be able to pluck me out of his hands?' They have been taught now to understand better what that meaneth, 'Christ of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' and this is all their salvation, and all their desire.

6thly, He takes occasion by these temptations to kill in them earthly affections. They have been driven to straits, out of which all the wealth of the world could not help them, in which all the pride of life could not a jot refresh them, and under which all pleasures, though lighter than vanity, must be a very burden. To talk of comfort to them from worldly things in the day of their calamity, were to attempt to force back

a storm with the breath of your mouth. Then they seek not what others own to be the vanity of the world: and what they then felt, is not so forgotten, but that it is their first care to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Make them sure of an interest in Christ, let it be certain that God is theirs, and they have what they want and seek for. Let who will take the honours, dignities, and pleasures of life, they only desire to do their duty in the world, while God leaves them in it. In short, not out of a peevish discontent, but upon a deliberate choice, upon trial and experience, they refuse the things which are on earth, and choose those which are above.

7thly, Once more; he takes occasion by these temptations to improve a blessed spirit of meekness in those that are tried by them. Self-will has, as it were, done its worst, and spent itself; and the whole man is become more tame

and manageable. He has learnt to be submissive under the hand of Providence, quiet when God strikes him, and ready to render up what God calls for. He is more subject to the divine guidance; and respecting his concerns of a spiritual nature, acquiesces with the dispensations of the Spirit, and waits with patience the mortification of sin and the growth of grace. He has more of the lamb in his conduct to others: like his Master, he is not ready to open his mouth, rather suffers wrong, yields his own way and humour, and is kind and condescending. In short, the edge of his own will is taken off, the height of his lofty looks brought low, the unruliness of his spirit broken. His spiritual troubles have helped him forward in meekness.

Thus you see now, how Christ turns the devices of the enemies of his people upon themselves, and makes the rage and malice of Satan a signal occasion of promoting grace and holiness in his

people. And from what has been said, we may make this plain remark, that since it is in the pride and unbelief of our hearts, that these grievous temptations have their main foundation, our business is constantly to maintain, and diligently to improve, a humble sense of ourselves, and a lively faith in God through Jesus Christ. By which only, we shall be either preserved from sinning, when we are thus tempted, or be in the way of receiving a blessing by the temptation.

It may not be proper to dismiss a discourse of this sort, without remarking, that the temptations you have heard described, are not the effects of what people affect to call melancholy; a term, indeed, now-a-days, very liberally bestowed on all serious religion. If a man is brought to a right use of his reason, and because he is perfectly sure there is at hand a future state of glory, sets himself to seek it in the only way it can be

obtained, by living according to the Gospel of Christ, the cry presently is, The man is melancholy. Ah! my dear brethren, would to God I could see you all seized with this melancholy, if it must be called so! I am sure it would bring you much joy in the end. 'Nay,' it may be said, 'but we don't think a man melancholy for being a sober serious Christian; but you will not deny, that what you have been describing, is not very comfortable.' True! But what then? Is not Christianity a warfare, and can a man fight without enemies? And, if there be enemies, will they not bring the Christian warrior, as well as any other, into some trouble? Is not the war, this land is engaged in, good? Or, would you that we should decline it, and give up all to our enemies, because it is attended with expense of men and money? You would unquestionably condemn and call for justice on that soldier who should show himself a

coward in the day of battle; and be ready to say, had you been in his place, you would not have so misbehaved. And how then can you cast blame on Christianity, because it engages men to fight? or raise objections to it, because there are enemies in the way, who bring the Christian soldier into straits? or, why will you call that madness and melancholy, which is but the genuine consequence of a man's having to deal with spiritual, yet real enemies, who are expert, and active, and powerful? The plain truth is, that they who talk at this rate, are very cowards; they know they ought, but they know they dare not look the devil, world, and flesh, in the face: and so are endeavouring to keep cowards in countenance, by railing on those who have more courage than themselves, and by heaping upon them reproach for those very scars, which in any other war would bring them the highest honour. In fact, if we are strangers to

temptation, 'it is because we have not really inlisted under Christ's banner,' And I must leave every man to judge, how the great Captain of salvation will receive such at the last day, who, though they have called themselves his, yet have given up his cause into the hands of his enemies, because they would not fight. O sirs, in the name of God, let us look forward to that day, 'when they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.'

# SERMON VII.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

WE are now at liberty to return to the subject suggested in these words; and which we were obliged by the late season to lay aside. I have undertaken to explain and improve the matter contained in them, the office of Christ in the character he here bears, of the Purifier and Refiner of his people, in an illustration of these several points; namely,

1st, What is to be understood by his purging and purifying his people.

2dly, That it is his office to do it.

3dly, That he his perfectly qualified to do it.

4thly, The means he uses in this his work. And,

5thly, The manner in which he doeth it.

Having despatched the three former points, we are now under the fourth head, considering the means which Christ uses to purify and purge the hearts of his people from remaining corruption, unto a growing purity and holiness. And, though in fact he does make all things work to this effect, yet, since the principal of all his methods is *sufferings*, and it seems also to be that method only, to which the words of my text have a reference, we have confined ourselves to them in these discourses; and have already spoken of *temporal calamities*, trouble arising from living in an evil world, persecution for righteousness'

sake, and temptations from corruption and the devil. I will now endavour,

5thly, To show you, that, by searching trials of their graces, the Head of the Church does greatly purify and exalt the holiness of his people; by putting the grace that is in us to the proof, he improves it, and thereby diminishes the influence of corrupt nature. This it may be proper to exemplify in some special instances.

1st. Sometimes he brings us into sharp trials of our faith, that by them he may the more disengage our hearts from the love of worldly things. The story of Abraham's being commanded to sacrifice his son, readily presents itself to our view in proof of this. Isaac was the child of promise, the very child with whom God would establish the covenant he had made with Abraham. This was the very word of promise a year before the child was born. And Abraham could not think that in any other Isaac

whom God might give him by Sarah, in place of this which was now to be sacrificed, there should be a restoration of the promise and the covenant; for he knew the promise was made, and the covenant after him entailed upon this very Isaac who should be born unto him at 'that very time in the next year.' The proof which Abraham's faith was put to, therefore, was even no less than this, that he should believe God would, because he had said so, make that very Isaac whom he was about to sacrifice with his own hand, the heir of the promise; the very person by whom God would make Abraham and Sarah the father and mother of nations. This you will own was putting his faith to the proof indeed. For what a seeming impossibility! Isaac shall be the father of many nations: yet, I am now by the command of God to put him to death. 'But he accounted, that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;

and expected, without any doubt, he would do so. For he knew that God's word must stand.' So he puts his hand with cheerfulness to the knife to slay his beloved Isaac. What could be God's design in this? you will say. He tells us himself; it was to tempt Abraham; *i. e.* to try and prove him. But why should God try Abraham at so severe a rate? The answer is, God did so; and that implies, there was a sufficient reason. But was this any mark of God's love to Abraham? Certainly it was. 'Abraham was the father of the faithful;' he must therefore be a grand example of faith. God therefore wrought up this grace of faith in him, by a variety of discipline, to an amazing height. But in no instance did the power of the Spirit work so mightily upon him, as in this last trial, which was a noble conclusion of his extraordinary life. By this last trial, his faith was exalted to the fullest assurance; to a pitch it had not reached before; as

appears by his fears, not many years before, forcing him to the practice of a *downright lie* in Egypt; and by his sinful unbelief, when God first made known to him his purpose of giving him a child by Sarah. The love of life and ease had had their place in Abraham as well as others; he had unbelief to master as well as we. And you must believe him more than a man, if you imagine the command to sacrifice his Isaac, did not put his faith in God, and his parental fondness, to the last proof; and raise such objections from the side of his corrupt nature, as made the trial as necessary for his own soul, as it was for the glory of divine grace. But is Abraham singular? Is our faith so strong, as to have excluded all doubt in any place; and the object of it, the blessed God, so near and dear to our hearts, as to have disengaged us from all creature-love? Need we not, that our faith should be proved, and put to those trials which, by

co-operating grace, will strengthen and increase it, and exalt us to greater victory over the world? And has the faithful Head of the Church left so much as one of his believing people without such trials of grace, as have contributed to the increase of their faith and love? Look back, and you will see in your ordinary course, that from the world, the men and things of it, have arisen to you a perpetual succession of trials, which have shown you your unbelief, and secret respect to present considerations, under which, nothing but grace quickening your faith in God, and faithfulness to him, could give you any support; and by the continual and unavoidable exercises of which you have found increase in those happy and divine dispositions of heart; and your case must have been very peculiar, if you have not been called to more extraordinary trials of faith and love in the way of your duty; if you have not known seasons not

altogether unlike this of Abraham, when God's command lay upon you, driving you to such a strait, that you must either renounce Christ, or what was dearest to you in the world, the very Isaac of your heart: and say, whether your steadfastness in such cases has not had a happy influence to exalt you farther above the world, unto a living more by faith.

2dly. Sometimes again Christ puts us upon such proofs of our faith, as wonderfully disengage us from the fears of men. There was plainly a great deal of fear of man in the heart of Moses, perhaps more a great deal than ever he had thought of, when 'the Lord appeared unto him, to send him into Eygpt, to bring out God's people and his brethren from their slavery there.' This you may see at large, in the third and fourth chapters of Exodus. Yet you see what was the issue; how bold was Moses become, to look Pharaoh in

the face, to deliver God's message, and to demand his submission thereto! And what was the reason of this great change? What should render him, who but a little while ago was so cowardly, by and by, afterwards, so undaunted as not to be afraid of the wrath of the king? Why, his faith was increased and strengthened; God had work for him to do: he orders him to do it; Moses dared not disobey: but his faith was weak, he had no courage to go: well, faith got the better of fear; and, in the end, so strongly prevailed, that Moses was bold as a lion. Now will any one say, that this severe trial of his faith was not a great blessing to his soul? or, that if he had not been brought into it, he would not have remained in that same fearful spirit which caused him first to fly from Eygpt? Yet, when he was called out to go to so great a man as Pharaoh, to carry a message so disagreeable to him, and therefore so dangerous

to the messenger, he found, you see, great pleadings in his heart against it. No doubt he was disputing, Why should I be sent rather than another? Here I am at present, far enough out of harm's way: and must I be thrust into such a business as this? No doubt he was earnestly wishing to be excused. That appears evidently from the pretences he made: 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Eygpt?' No sonner is this pretence answered, but out comes another: 'They will not believe me, nor hearken unto me.' And when that also is silenced, still he has another at hand: 'I am not fit for the work; I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' And when that neither can be admitted, out he comes bluntly with an, 'O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;' as much as to say, I do not care to go, send therefore by some other.

Now, say, if the Lord had taken him at his word, what had Moses got by it? or, what should have helped him over the sinful fears of his own heart? He would have forsaken his own mercies, would God have suffered him. But seeing the command was peremptory, and God would not discharge him from it, he had grace enough to go, though you find it was trembling; and you have heard how he was blessed in his deed; how this proof and exercise of his faith wrought to the santifying his heart from slavish fear. And now I leave yourselves to judge, as many as have acquaintance with a work of grace, whether, when you have been called to a self-denying duty, you have not found the fears of Moses, and the very pleadings in your hearts which he made before God? I would farther ask, whether these fears have not sometimes prevailed, to cause you to decline duty? And when they have, whether you have not been un-

faithful to your own souls by this disobedience, encouraging unbelief, and confirming fear within you? Whereas, when conscience has stood fast, and you have gone to duty with how much soever fear, you have gained a victory over yourselves; faith has gained ground, and fear lost it; and that so much the more, as the trial has been severe and pressing. By the care and love of Christ, his people have always their reward in their labour; for the duty they do, he is sure to pay them in hand; and he always orders it so, that his glory and their interest go forward together. What has been shown concerning love of the creature and fear of men, might be made appear with like evidence in all other cases. But I will mention only one other instance, wherein the good effect of being brought to trying duties, does much promote our purification; and that is,

3dly, That the being obliged and called to public profession of the name

of Christ, in the midst of a haughty world, is a signal means of mortifying in us the love of man's esteem. We all naturally love the praise of men more than the praise of God. Nay; and when we are regenerate, there is a sad hankering within us after the esteem of men. Whoever knows any thing of his own heart, knows this. He perfectly knows, that he does not at all want to make a show of religion, (as a blind world interprets all profession of Christ;) but that, were he to hearken to his heart, he should surely hide it through shame, and to keep fair with those who are not the friends of it. But Christ will not have the matter lie here. Every one, that calls himself his disciple, shall own or disown him. He brings them all to the proof. Here, he says, is my kingdom; let the world know by your conduct, that you belong to it. Here are my people; love them, take them by the hand. What answer do you make? Are you for us, or against us?

Nay; but if you forbear to own us through shame, you are against us. Here, alas! how many fail? Is it not so? Is it not a common case, that many would be Christians, but they are ashamed to be so? I doubt not, many a conscience in this place is even now bearing testimony to the truth of what I say: they would be Christians, but they are ashamed: they know their case is bad, but what can they do? They dare not for the present: they think hereafter, and in other circumstances, they shall do better; shall not be much laughed at; or shall not so much need to mind it, if they are. Thus they deceive their own souls; come near to the kingdom of God, but do not enter, and will not go to heaven, unless they can carry the esteem of the world with them thither. But this is not the case of all. The truly humbled will not yield to their shame; but since it is their duty to own Christ, they will do it; let whatever

reproach follow, they will own Christ; that is to say, they will do what he bids them, however particular it makes them. They will follow him, and not the ways of the world; they will abstain from all practices which bring dishonour to him, and give offence to his people. This they will do; and they will not be beaten out of it by all the authority of custom on the other part, nor by all the reproach you can load them with. Now these are true disciples; they confess Christ before men, and he will own them before his Father which is in heaven. But in the mean time, they find a sad hankering after worldly esteem, are charging themselves daily with it, and praying earnestly for deliverance from it. Well, and Christ hears them: and how, think you, does he answer their prayers, and set their souls in a larger room? Why, he calls upon them to make some more public profession; he brings them into circumstances where they cannot decline

it with a good conscience; he bids them come forth, and makes them sensible there is no drawing back, though their hearts would needs have it so; they call on him for help; he strengthening them, they do not deny him: and what is the issue? Even this, that they find the esteem of the world brought into greater subjection, and that they are enabled to act more in the spirit of the Apostle, 'not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.'

Doubtless, as grace is improved, so is corruption mortified by discipline. And, while some think strangely they have no shame of Christ, having never made any profession of him, others may take this comfort to themselves, that the more shame they suffer for Christ's sake, the less shame they shall have of him in their hearts; the more pressing the reproach is without, the less powerful will the dread of it be within.

We may now properly conclude what has been said; the result of which is in

general, that trials of grace are special means of purification; with these two remarks.

*First*, that it is as much folly as sin, for us to desire to be our own directors; and that for this plain reason, that we should most certainly choose to be excused from those duties which we have now seen are very special means of our purification. Would Abraham, think ye, have chosen to sacrifice his Isaac with his own hands? Or, had Moses been left to his own guidance, would he have liked to go upon such an errand as God sent him? Or any one of us, should we fall upon such ways, if we were at our own liberty, as would bring us to shame in the eyes of the world? No; they and we are the children of Adam. If we were our own carvers, we should surely fall upon such methods for our purification, as were not very burdensome to the flesh, and would do us no manner of good. It is our wisdom, as

well as our duty, to desire God may direct for us. He will unquestionably minister to us such things as are exactly fittest to forward the sanctification of our hearts and lives, that great work to be done here, in order to our being made meet for the kingdom of glory in heaven.

*Secondly*, Since Christ makes the greatest trials of grace the greatest means of improving it, we must not be so much our own enemies, as to decline any duty God calls us to. We may not run upon trials: that is presumption, and has no promise of a blessing. But when duty calls, we must obey, whatever the case be; otherwise, by disobeying God, we rob ourselves of the intended blessing. Obedience to God's will, according to God's word, is the compass we are to steer by. By warping a little from it, we may escape a trial, but shall miss a blessing: by keeping to it, God will keep us. And though it may bring us into pressing circumstances, yet, never into

any wherein we shall not be supported, and which also shall not work for our spiritual good. Be close, therefore, with God's revealed will. There lies your wisdom. Never start from that on any consideration. 'Tis that is the course which shall bring you to increase of grace here, and to abundance of glory hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# SERMON VIII.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

We have been attempting to show the means which Christ makes use of, for effecting that work of purification in the hearts of his people, which is here referred to: and to the instances already produced, I now, in the

6th and last place, add, that he overrules their very falls into sin to this happy purpose. The people of God, though regenerate, are liable to fall into sin. If this were denied, the consequence would

be, as far as Scripture example can teach us, that there have been no such persons as have been really regenerate. Noah fell into a very gross sin in his security; and so did righteous Lot after him; and Abraham once and again not only told, but acted a lie. It is hard to say of David, whether he was more notable for his sins or his repentance. Peter not only denied his Master, but afterwards, in the full enjoyment of all his furniture of grace and gifts, fell into a base compliance with the fear of his heart, being desirous to please them that were of the circumcision. The truth is, regenerate persons are but in part renewed, and have in them still the natural, as well as the new and spiritual, principle; the body of sin dwells in them, and their will is but too ready to close in with its motions, which also it would always do, were it not that it is supported against them by the immediate, actual, and powerful operations of

the Holy Spirit in every case. When there is not a strict watch kept over the body of sin, and its motions are not instantly rejected; when the natural pride of our own strength has gained a secret ascendency, and of course we do not lean upon the arm of God; then temptation coming, corrupt nature (as the very nature of it is) rises up to join with it; the unsupported will consents, and sin is brought forth. So that, unless it could be made appear, that in regeneration the whole body of sin is quite consumed and done away, it cannot but be, that the people of God, in this world, are liable to fall into sin. But the point before us is, that Christ takes occasion, by the very sins of believers, to advance their sanctification. I am not insensible, how ready careless and unregenerate persons will be to satisfy themselves in the thought, that the best do sin, and if so, why is it not as well with us as others? While, there-

fore, I am speaking of the point before us, it will be exceedingly proper to have this poor pretence continually in view; and, while I am showing the love and power of Christ, in taking occasion by the very sins of his people to do them good, to make it plain too, that the unconverted sinner has not the least ground of hope from the falls of the righteous, because, from the beginning to the end in this matter, his case and theirs are utterly different.

To explain this matter, therefore, in the one and other of the views proposed, let us take the case of Peter in denying Christ for our guide and pattern, adding, as need shall be, some illustrations from the case of David. And from the case of Peter, I will endeavour to show you what goes before, and what follows, the falls of God's children; and, in both cases, let us consider also, from the instance of Judas in betraying Christ,

what goes before, and what follows after in the sins of the unregenerate.

1st. Let us consider what goes before in the falls of God's people? adding also what precedes the sins of the unconverted. And it appears from the case of Peter, that the people of God, before they sin, have lost much of their fear, through a self-confidence that lies in their hearts. 'Lord, I am ready to follow thee to prison and to death; and though all should forsake thee, yet will not I.' This was talking very high: there was no sense of the power of the body of sin in this. It was not talking like one who had been told, 'that without Christ he could do nothing.' Peter had evidently left all for Christ; as Christ's follower, had no doubt suffered the reproach of his Master; without question, had many times stood up boldly in the face of Christ's enemies; had gone out and preached in his name, wherever his Master sent him; and it is

past dispute, he was secretly puffed up on this. What, should he fail, that had stood long, and done so much? He that had owned Christ so often, should he now deny him through fear? This was very unlikely. There was little apprehension he should be such a coward as this. Thus, through long experience of God's keeping them, his people are wont to lose their fear of falling, to be secretly puffed up, as if now there was little danger, and that small question need be made of, at least, their acquitting themselves well; and this is the first step in them towards a fall, and a sure forerunner of some shameful conduct coming after.

2dly, The next step is slothfulness, which all along goes after the heels of fearless self-confidence. 'Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation,' says Christ. 'What need?' says Peter: 'there is no danger; my eyes are heavy, I will lay me down, and sleep a little.' Self-

confidence makes believers slack and remiss in spiritual duties. There is a coldness come over their hearts; the flesh pleads; they do not make a resolute resistance, nor stir themselves up to pray; for they do not see their need of it as usual.

3dly, Slothfulness, thus indulged, begets insensibility. Christ's repeated exhortations made no impression upon Peter: 'I tell thee, Peter, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' What could be more close, personal, and alarming? Yet, Peter felt it not. Then what reproof could be more touching than that which came after? 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?' Yet it made no impression. No more did the repeated call to prayer. The word was sharp, but still made no impression. Just so it is with us all: when pride has made us slothful, sloth makes us insensible. We hear and read the word of God, as if we did not either

read or hear it. Warnings do not teach us; judgments do not alarm us; expostulations do not quicken us; the word of God, as to the effect it was wont to have on us, has lost its edge. After all this, follows—

4thly, Running into temptation. What business had Peter in the High Priest's hall? Had his Master ordered him to be there? or was he called thither by any duty? He was not come to own his Master, to stand by him in this hour of darkness, if possibly he could have been of any service. It is too evident. Why then did he come? Out of curiosity. He came to see the end; like a sculking coward, he would thrust in among the crowd, to see what they would do with Jesus. Thus, when, through self-confidence, we are grown slothful, and are fallen into a sleep and insensibility, which God knows we all are liable to sink into, then, being off our guard, we venture into needless temptations at the instance of one bad thing

or another, which has gained an ascendency in our hearts, whether vanity, or idleness, or pleasure, or covetousness, or pride. After this follows,

Lastly, the fall. And what else could be expected from Peter than what he did? Every way he was ready for it: he had not the strength of God to keep him: his confidence had carried him into temptation, and he was cold, lifeless, and utterly insensible to all apprehension of duty: so he denied Christ; yea, and with such strong circumstances of fear, as would make any one wonder who knew not his own heart. Peter should now be brought very low. This now was the progess of Peter's sin: yet, after all, his was the spot of God's children. It was a sin of infirmity, not of malignity; of surprise, not of contempt. He was brought into it, contrary to the general purpose of his heart, and through a secret, not allowed, practice of natural corruption. Therefore, in every respect, it was quite another thing

from the conduct of Judas in betraying his Master. This will appear by the bare mention of some circumstances preceding the sin of Judas. As,

1st, While the general purpose of Peter's heart was for Christ, the grand habitual purpose of Judas's heart was for the world; he was a thief, it is said; a covetous worldling: and, therefore, when he determined to sell Christ, he did it (as it is said, the devil makes lies, of his own) out of that ungodly principle of ambitious covetousness, that ruled and had dominion in and over him. So did not Peter: the bent of his mind and heart was quite the other way, though he was artfully and insensibly drawn away of his lusts, and enticed to do this great wickedness. Wherefore, the first step towards any sin, in the unregenerate, is the mere malicious wickedness of their own heart.

2dly, The reigning and malignant covetousness of Judas's heart stirred him

up, by the instigation of the devil, deliberately to devise upon the *horrid* sin of betraying Christ. He did not determine upon it for the sake of committing the sin, but he determined to do it at the instance of his covetousness, without, most likely, considering about the sin there was in it, whether it were more or less. An unregenerate man, out of his heart, led along by pride, covetousness, and carnality, does deliberately determine upon, and most readily fall in with, any thing proposed to his mind, which may gratify his pride, satisfy his covetousness, or indulge his inclinations. But the regenerate do not thus deliberately determine upon any thing that is sinful; they are always drawn into it by the deceitfulness of unseen lusts, or forced upon it by present pressing temptations. Peter did not determine to deny Christ; nothing was farther from his thoughts, or his heart: as far as he saw, he was

determined not to deny him, but was deceived by his treacherous lusts.

3dly, Peter did not go on to his sin contemptuously, as did Judas. He did not indeed hearken to warnings given him: but what was the reason of that? What, because he was determined to deny Christ at all adventures, or because, as he thought, he should never deny him on any consideration? It was the part of unregenerate Judas to condemn the warnings his Master gave him, because he was set and bent upon betraying his Lord. Whether what Christ said to him grated on his conscience or not, it is plain he was fixed upon the thing, despised counsel, and would not hearken to reproof. Those who are without the grace of God, always go on to their sins contemptuously; they make no account of God's commands; or, if conscience boggles, they overrule it. And, now, without going farther, let any man judge, whether Judas could take any counte-

nance from Peter's sin. Peter, by the very manner of his being drawn into this sin, appears to have been a believer; and every step towards the transgression of Judas proved him to be an infidel. The unregenerate do nothing as do the children of God; they cannot even sin as they do: but enough of this matter. I have shown you the steps by which the children of God are drawn away to sin against him, from the case of Peter; and that the children of the devil have no cause to take countenance therefrom by the case of Judas. I had thoughts to have finished the whole, by showing you what follows the sins of God's people; but the time will by no means permit me. I conclude, therefore, with some remarks from what has been already advanced. And,

1st, It appears from the case of Peter, that believers should be very careful to walk humbly, in a constant sense of the deep corruption of their natures. Had

Peter done this, his fall had been prevented: but pride had stept in between: so he was self-confident, and fell. A haughty spirit, it is manifest, goes before a fall; for the strength of Christ is made perfect in our weakness. In reality, when we are weak, then only it is we are strong. But how shall we walk humbly in the sense of our own weakness? This we cannot do any farther than we see what we are in ourselves. There is much talking of the grace of God in the world, but very little or no sense of the want of it, because of the exceeding sinfulness of our nature always prompting us to every sin, and ready to side with every temptation. A really humble man sees the seeds of all sin lying in his heart, knows they are always working, and must always prevail for any power or will he has of his own to restrain them; and, therefore, thinks no trial not to be an overmatch for him, nor any the least duty possible for him to

perform, if left to himself. We should labour to cultivate this experimental acquaintance with ourselves; so shall we be looking up for strength in the consciousness of our insufficiency, and comfortable experience will in that case convince us, that the Lord himself stands by us to save us.

2dly, From the case of Peter it appears farther, 'that we must watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation,' and fall under it. Watching unto prayer is not less contrary to the flesh than it is profitable to the spirit. Alas! how soon do our hands hang down, our zeal decay, our desire languish, our eyes close upon the glorious things of God and eternity, when we do but slacken a little in meditation and prayer! Then we find ourselves disarmed, unfit to fight the Lord's battles, yea, hardly able to defend ourselves: faith staggers, hope languishes, love waxeth cold. Why do not we wrestle with God more than we do? Ah, sirs!

why are we not instant, continually, in prayer? Is there not a cause? Is not sin at our door? Does not Satan stand ready? Is not the world abundant with snares, and the flesh prepared to join? God will have us on our knees; if our wants will not bring us to them, our sins shall. How much more honour might we have done to Jesus in the world, how much more comfort might we have enjoyed in our own souls, had we prayed as we ought? I would need stir you up, my friends: you, did I say? yea, and myself too, to more abundant prayer. I do not mean to more abundance of words, but of spirituality, earnestness, and importunity. O 'Let us consider how Peter fell;' and 'let us watch and pray, lest we also enter into temptation.'

3dly, Peter's case warns us to maintain and improve a tenderness under, and unto the word of God. It is a sad thing to lose any part of our feeling to what God says to us, or promises to give

us, or expects from us, or threatens against us. The poor Apostle was, through his self-confidence, sunk into a spiritual slumber: he could not hear the voice of God, nor feel the awful caution. 'Take heed how ye hear,' saith Christ. The word will harden you or act otherwise, as ye hear it, my brethren. Why are so many, wherever the Gospel is preached, here as well as else where, so visibly hardened by it? Why do the threatened judgments of God, even the damnation of the lowest hell, no longer, or but a little, move them? Why are they come to cast the commands of God behind their backs without fear, and to live as they list, as if they had no account to give? Why do they no more make any reckoning of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, and post on to hell, as if it were a matter of indifference, whether that or heaven were their everlasting portion? I need say no more to recommend to you a tender feeling to God's word, to

hear all that God says with reverence, and to see that it have a growing influence upon the heart.

4thly, We should learn from Peter to avoid all needless temptations. Indeed, it is an ill sign if we do not avoid them: and, besides, by running into them we are upon the brink of some soul-confounding sin. We are grown confident, we are grown secure, we are fallen asleep, the love of sin is revived, when we will venture into temptations. It is a sure mark of decay when we are come to this, and are ready to plead the indifference of the thing we do, as a sufficient excuse for doing it. 'What harm,' would Dinah, Jacob's daughter, say, 'can there be in going out to see the daughters of the land?' Yet she had not gone out, had her heart been right with God; and by staying at home she had prevented what followed. To plead the harmlessness of a thing that is dangerous to the soul, is the very way of the careless. What

harm is there in such a dress? will one say; and what harm in such a book, or such company? another: though the former be a temptation to pride, the latter to inclination. This is not the manner of God's children, who should be careful to preserve the spirituality and integrity of their hearts, by keeping out of danger; and who never do heedlessly run in the way of it, but when in their souls they have beforehand suffered some damage. And let the experience of the past teach us what are our old sins which bring us under peculiar shame in the review of our lives. Are they not those we have committed through venturing upon needless temptation? When we are in the way of duty, there is reason, indeed, to believe God will keep us; but there is no reason to be assigned why we should expect God to keep us, when we will not take any care to keep ourselves.

Lastly. In the case of Judas, let all careless unregenerate sinners behold the

picture of their own lives. Judas sinned from an heart void of all faith in God, and love towards him, but full of prevailing corruption. So do all unregenerate persons; their hearts are all evil; all for the world and the flesh; and what then but sin can issue from them? Judas sinned deliberately. He devised and contrived the betrayal of his Master; and when his heart had conceived this great sin, he kept it there. Such is the manner of the unconverted: they sin with deliberation. I do not mean from a mere purpose of sinning, but they devise and determine upon things which are sinful, without any thought whether they be sinful, without any fear if they be so. Judas sinned contemptuously; he would not be put out of what he had resolved upon by any means: no more will any other slave to sin. The unregenerate always sin contemptuously; they will do always what they list; let God or man say what they will, let conscience

plead, let vengeance threaten, let mercy entreat, yet will they go on their own way. On the whole, this Judas was a horrid traitor; who doubts it? But, alas! how many Judas's are there in the world, who rail at Judas, yet excuse themselves? But flattery does not alter, it only conceals the truth. Take away the mask, and the unregenerate will find the features of Judas are not a jot more deformed than their own; that they as well as he sin maliciously, deliberately, and contemptuously; and whoever does this is as great a betrayer, as he that sold his Master.

# SERMON IX.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

IT was proposed to conclude what we had to say concerning the means which Christ uses for purifying the hearts of his people, by showing, that he makes their falls in sin effectual to this purpose. In speaking to which point, two things were to be considered:—*First*, What goes before—*Secondly*, What follows after, the sins of God's servants: both which were to be set out from the case of Peter, with some illustrations from that of David. And to defeat any en-

couragement which unregenerate persons might be forward to take from the falls of the righteous, it was determined also, as we went along, to take in what goes before and after the sins of the unconverted, from the instance of Judas, in order that, by the comparison, it might appear, the falls of the one did not give the smallest ground of hope to the other. What goes before the falls of God's people has been shown, from Peter's example, to be self-confidence, and what issue therefrom, spiritual sloth, insensibility to the word, and adventuring into needless temptation. But that they do not go on to sin, as from the case of Judas the unregenerate were seen to do, *maliciously*, *deliberately*, and *contemptuously*, was made abundantly plain. We are now,

*Secondly*, To consider what follows after the falls of God's people, as also of the unconverted; and herein to discover, how the sins of believrs are

made to tend to their establishment, and those of others unto their hardness of heart.

Now, in the recovery of the regenerate from their falls, you shall see how Christ works in them, to strike at and bring down self-confidence, which led them into sin, and that by removing those effects which self-confidence had begotten in them, and then dealing with self-confidence itself. For,

1st, Whereas self-confidence had begotten insensibility to the word, Christ now gives it a power, and makes the soul feel. Before his fall, self-sufficient Peter had no ear to hear the most pressing warnings, expostulations, and reproofs made him by Christ: but now a look is enough; 'The Lord looked on Peter:' he did no more; that was sufficient; it pierced his heart; it came into his soul like a dagger; he was confounded; he was filled with confusion in a moment; it said, as it were, to him,

Now, Peter, hear—the cock crows—thou knowest the sign. It is not indeed always so soon that the reproof touches the heart. In the case of David there was a very considerable space of time after his grievous falls respecting Uriah, in which he lay dull, stupid, and without feeling. But whenever the reproof comes, it is always in such a way as to convince the soul it comes from the Spirit. Why was not David brought sooner than after many months to a thought of himself? Or why not Peter, after the first or second denial, as well as after the third? What! had they lost their senses? Think we, David did not know all the while that murder and adultery were sins? Or Peter, after his first and second denial, was he determined that he was doing nothing amiss? See the evident proof of the operations of the Spirit. When the Spirit came, then both of them were brought to their feeling; but, whatever knowledge they

had of their duty, and whatever reproofs from the word of God (and no doubt all that time David had hardly been without hearing the word of God, and had had his warnings as well as Peter); yet, till the Spirit came, their knowledge, and the word too, had no power, and they lay dull, stupid, and senseless. So, you see, the recovery of believers after their falls is purely from Christ, and that the first step he takes towards it, is to remove their insensibility, and bring them to their feeling. Being thus alarmed, and roused out of their insensibility,

2dly, He pleads freely with their consciences, sets their sin before them, lays it out in all its circumstances, aggravations, and causes, and hereby brings the soul out of that sleepy slothfulness in which it had been lying. Now, this pleading is always, directly or indirectly, by means of the word. 'Peter remembered the word of Jesus, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow twice,

thou shalt deny me thrice.' And we find this pleading laid out more largely before David's conscience by the mouth of Nathan: 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things: wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.' Thus closely does Christ plead with the souls of his people after their falls, setting their iniquity in order before them, marking out the aggravations of it, as done against past mercies, and showing them the evil and sinfulness of what they have done: and

especially all is traced up to corrupt nature, the fountain-head out of which the sin originally issued. As David expressly owns in his case, it was his deceitful heart that allured him, it was his sinful nature that strove within him, and prevailed over him: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Behold, this was the ground of all; behold, this was the enemy that did me the mischief. And now the heart being brought to feeling, and the sin laid forth in its true and lively colours,

3dly, Hereupon proceeds godly sorrow. 'Peter went out and wept bitterly;' his heart was big with grief, he could not contain himself; he sought where to weep; he went out, that he might bewail himself alone before God. Now, what made him weep? He was not insensible to divine displeasure. A child that knows his father's love, cannot but feel when his father expresses himself to

be justly dissatisfied with his conduct. Guilt, for the present, had destroyed his comfort in God. But that was not all; his ingratitude stung him to the heart to deny so dear, so affectionate a Master! And then his disloyalty, to deny him after so many protestations! His unkindness! what, at such a time to deny him? Then the wrong also done to his honour and interest. What was his denying, but an owning that Christ was a malefactor, and in practice giving consent to what his enemies were doing against him? And the baseness of it, too: through fear of a poor servant-maid, to deny him? Views like these made Peter mourn bitterly. And what, think you, judged he now of his self-confidence? Would he ever trust his heart more? How his proud looks were brought low! If he should ever own the name of Christ, he could only do it through power from on high. Peter went out, and opened the grief of his

heart before God, in bitterness of spirit. The children of God, when they have been drawn into sin, do not fly from God in proud despair, but they fly to him in shame and sorrow. And what is the consequence? 'This self-same thing,' saith the Apostle, 'that ye sorrowed, is after a godly sort; what carefulness it wrought in you (to leave the sin into which you had fallen); yea, what clearing of yourselves (from the guilt of it, by earnest confession unto God, and supplication for mercy); yea, what indignation (and displeasure against yourselves for what ye had done); yea, what fear (of falling again by the same deceitfulness of your hearts into the like iniquity); yea, what vehement desire (of returning to, and pleasing God); yea, what zeal in his service; yea, what revenge upon yourselves and lusts that had brought you into this evil?' Or, if you will see the true godly mourning of the believing soul, after having fallen into

sin, you may find it largely exemplified in the 51st Psalm, where, in the sight and sense of his transgression regarding Uriah, he lays open his whole heart before God, begging mercy, pleading nothing but mercy, casting himself entirely upon mercy. 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. And as he begs this with earnestness, so from the deepest sense of his own vileness, in the most piercing remembrance of his sin, in a lively discovery of the dishonour he had done to God by it, and the clearest sense of his having provoked God's most deserved wrath against him: 'I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is ever before me: against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou judgest.' Neither does he stick in the outside; he

is led into the very bottom of his heart, the very fountain of sin is laid bare before him, while he thus sues for mercy, confesses his iniquity, and justifies God in his judgments against him: 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.' And, now, as is exceedingly natural to a soul big with distress, and pressed with a sense of variety of wants, his prayer grows irregular, and, by turns, he begs forgiveness, comfort, grace, renovation, the sense of God's presence, as his need of the one or other of these presented itself to his soul; and in the asking of them, you will find at bottom, strong actings of faith, ardent purposes of living to the glory of God, and longing desires for the prosperity and increase of God's people. And thus it is now, that the servants of Jesus are brought to sorrow, and return to God after their falls into sin; judge ye, if it be not to the advan-

cing in them a deep knowledge of the sinfulness and apostacy of their nature, true repentance for, and real hatred of sin, mortification of pride and self-sufficiency, humble reverence of God's judgments, increasing value for the blood and righteousness of Christ; in short, a tenderness of conscience to walk more closely with God; and, if so, whether the great and good Head of the Church do not make their very sins signal means of their sanctification? But here, perhaps, a believer may say, 'Truly, I have had falls into sin, but I have not found all this good from them you have been speaking of.' This may be very likely. But what was the occasion of it? Did you not quench the Holy Spirit? How so? Why, after you fell, there was no small stir in your conscience: this you allow. But then you do not sufficiently submit to it; you did not give such an humble ear as you ought to the remonstrances and pleadings the Spirit

would have made about the matter; and did not suffer him to go to the bottom with you, to open to you your sin in its true colours, with all its causes and aggravations; you stopped him short, grew easy too hastily, did not allow time for self-inquiry and humiliation, nor set yourself with immediate diligence to seek God in confession; you delayed so long, that the present sensibility of your heart was weakened, and your eyes closed upon your sin; or you stopt too soon, before you had seen the truth of your case, and obtained grace to move into a bitter and efficacious sorrow. And it is evident, your profiting by a fall can only be in proportion to your humiliation for it. So that if you received not the good you might by your fall, it was not owing to Christ's want of love, but your want of diligence; for you know you must work together with him; and if, when he calls, you do not hearken, it must needs be, that his call cannot be effectual

to do you the service it would have done, had you been obedient thereto.

But will not another object, and say (for truly the heart of man is capable of any thing,) 'But if so much good as you speak of may be gotten by sin, is it not good to sin?' No: this were tempting God in the highest degree. For, how could I expect his blessing upon me, if I should industriously set myself to sin against, dishonour, and affront him? But, besides, a regenerate man cannot do it; he cannot wilfully choose to sin on any motive: when he does sin, it is by surprise and infirmity; and then the faithful God graciously lifts him up again, though it be by a severe discipline. Yet I know not, whether an awakened, but unconverted person, may not have devised, in his heart at least, such a project: in the uneasiness and vexation of his spirit, he may have been thinking, that, were he to fall into some great sin, it would effectually humble him. But this

is all in the ignorance of the necessity of divine grace, and in the pride of an unbroken spirit.

We have seen now, what follows after the falls of God's people. Let us see, on the other hand, what attends the sins of the unregenerate; and let the case of Judas teach us, that we may learn the difference between the one and the other.

1st. They have or have not gallings of conscience after sin. If they have not, but, by the custom of sinning, and by long opposition made in their conduct to the remonstrances of their own minds, they are past feeling, and go away as if nothing had happened: this looks much like a state of reprobation, and a being given over to work uncleanness with greediness. Dreadful condition! to be sealed up for everlasting burning, and to be under the power of that most shocking forerunner of it, insensibility to all the terrors. And yet, where men are so

far gone as to feel nothing after sinning, every act of sin has an effect to increase the hardness of the heart, as metal beat upon the anvil grows harder at every stroke. But, if there be gallings of conscience, then, according to the degree of them, they beget that sorrow that worketh death. And this is the second effect of an unregenerate man's falling into sin. An unregenerate man hath neither faith nor love, which constitute a man regenerate. Now, being without these when his conscience galls him for his sin, he cannot sorrow after a godly sort; but his grief is all selfish, which the Apostle calls sorrow that worketh death; for it fills him with deadly fears, and vexing anxiety and bitterness of conscience, because of his sin. Now, this sometimes lasts but a little space, passing away shortly in a forgetfulness of the sin committed; but other whiles, especially when some judgment of God falls in, it rests upon the spirit, tears the soul as it

were in pieces; and since, as I said, through the want of faith and love, it cannot have an issue the right way, it drives unto despair, while seeking peace, as well as the poor soul can, either in company, pleasure, drunkenness, and other methods of forgetfulness, which is the common course in such cases; or more rarely forces the man, in the madness of his rage of grief, to put a violent end to his life as did Ahithophel and Judas. And now let any man determine whether there be not a wide difference also between what follows upon the sins of saints and sinners; and whether, while the one by their falls are drawn nearer to God in repentance, and the other driven by their sins farther from him in desperation, the unconverted have the least ground to take comfort by the miscarriages of the children of God.

I have now finished what I had to say respecting the means which Christ

uses for the purging and purifying the hearts of his people, and have shown you, that he has the art, power, and care, to render the things, which in themselves seem, the most of them at least, very unlikely to answer any good end upon us, serviceable to his purposes in our santification; the common afflictions of life, the trouble arising from being in a wicked world, sufferings for righteousness' sake, the very temptations of the devil, and those, especially, which have the most of hell in them, the severest trials of grace, and even falls into sin, are the signal means which he uses, however little a blind world may, or ourselves, be sensible of it, to forward in believers the growth of holiness, and to mortify in them the body of sin. Can any thing set Christ in a more engaging and desirable light? Happy, happy they who have put themselves under his care! He cleanses them from their guilt, clothes them with his righteousness, and

is carefully and daily adding to their meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. O sirs, happy are the people that are in such a case! Is it not so? None can gainsay it. What, to turn our very curses into blessings! What can exceed this? And how deplorable the condition of those who will not have Christ to reign over them; who, by a miserable infatuation, are not only forsaking their own future mercies, but also turning their daily blessings into a curse and a snare: but this is the wisdom of this world, the boasted wisdom. We must become fools if we will be wise, and readily give all up for a crucified Jesus; else we are wretched here: and how wretched hereafter, God in mercy grant none here present may ever know by his *own experience! Amen.*

# SERMON X.

MALACHI iii, 3.

*And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*

AFTER having shown these several things from the words before us, 1. What we are to understand by Christ's purging and purifying the hearts of his people;

2. That it is his office to do this;

3. That he is perfectly qualified for this work;

4. The means he uses in doing it: it remains still, in the

5. and last place, to say something of the manner in which he does it. And the manner wherein he carries on the

work of purification in his people, I conceive to be this: 1st, He brings them into such circumstances as are best suited for improving their graces, and mortifying their corruptions.

2dly, Then, when by his providence he has brought them into such circumstances, he does take occasion by them, to make known to them the weakness of their graces, and the power of their corruptions.

3dly, Thus brought into a strait, they are sensible there is but one way for them, consistent with a good conscience, which is, to do their duty, and deny themselves.

4thly, To this more vigorous exercise of grace and self-denial, he enables them secretly by his grace, in answer to their prayers.

5thly, Hereby grace is strengthened, and sin is mortified, and loses of its power.

1. He brings them into such circum-

stances as are best suited for improving their graces and mortifying their corruptions. We may not think any thing falls out to us by chance, but must be sensible that every the minutest circumstance attending us is under a divine direction, and that in the nicest exactness with the needs of our souls. Here it is that the great Purifier shows his attention and skill; his attention, by weighing precisely what the case of the soul is; and his skill, by bringing us precisely into that very state of suffering, which is most fitted for doing us good. Those who have their senses exercised to a deep spiritual discernment of the ways of Providence, clearly discover this in past occurrences; they see, with admiration and thankfulness, how every thing has been ordered unto them in the best and happiest manner, insomuch that they are fully sensible, that nothing but ruin had been the consequence, had their condition been any how other than it

was; and that without the very disappointments, trials, and troubles they have gone through, it was impossible their souls should have prospered as they have done. How wisely, will one of these say, was such a dispensation calculated, and how seasonably was it dispensed, to meet with the desire of man's esteem, the pride of life, the love of ease, the love of interest and honour, which my heart had conceived; and such a dispensation, again, to confront my self-righteousness, my self-sufficiency, my unbelief; and again, such a dispensation to force me upon the exercise of faith, submission, resignation, and patience! Ah, what had I been this day, if the Lord had not dealt with me even as he has done continually? You will not wonder, that this enlightened soul draws from hence the strongest arguments for resignation and thankfulness, under whatever present afflictions, saying, 'I know, for I have been taught by long experience,

that this also shall work together for my good.'

2. When the Head of the Church has brought his people into such resignation and circumstances as are fittest for his purpose of improving their graces and mortifying their corruptions, he takes occasion by these circumstances to show them the weakness of the one, and the strength of the other. Metals, however pure they appear in the ore, have their dross in them: it is the furnace that shows they are not all they seem, and that they have a base alloy which must be purged away before they shall be fit for use. And it must be said of grace, as it may be of metals, 'The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.' And this affliction effectually doth, many times convincing a man he is not possessed of that strength of grace and power over corruption, which before perhaps he was ready to fancy himself attained unto. The well-dispensed trials

sent upon us show the weak places of our souls, bring forth to view the secret corruptions which before were not suspected to have any thing of the strength it is now found they have maintained. As instruments in the Lord's hand, Satan taught Job his impatience; Saul taught David his distrust of God; and the maid in the High Priest's hall taught Peter his fear and shame. When the trial comes, then the thoughts of our hearts are made manifest what they are; then we find we have not that faith in God, love towards him, trust in him, concern for his glory, which, in the day of our ease and freedom from pressing trial, we were ready to hope ourselves to have been blessed with. Then we see how weak and low we are in grace, and how much influence self and sin still have with us. And this is the way that Christ takes to show us to ourselves, whereby he makes us sensible we are nothing of what we ought to be; so also,

that we are not all which, peradventure, we thought we were. By this method he drags out to view from their lurking holes our covetousness, or love of ease, or love of life, or love of esteem, our pride, selfishness, or carnality, our want of charity, faith, or hope. Has not this been the very case? When you met with worldly difficulty, did it not show you your distrust of God? when you were visited with sickness, did not a lurking love of life appear? when you were injured or oppressed, did not resentment manifest itself? when you were called to own Christ, was there no shame? when you were called to suffer for him, was there no fear? Thus by peculiar circumstances, suited to the case of their souls, Christ shows his people the weakness of their graces and the power of their corruptions. But then,

3. As by these peculiar dispensations, suited to the very cases of their souls, he shows them the weakness of their graces

and the malignity of their corruptions; so these his despensations are always so ordered, that they cannot possibly maintain a good conscience, but by exerting those very graces which are weak, and opposing those very corruptions that are strong. Jonah must go to the Ninevites with a message disagreeable to them, and therefore very dangerous to himself. Here his faith was weak, and his fear strong: and, instead of going, he rises up to flee to Tarshish. But was this following a good conscience, not to do what God bade him? You see this dispensation brought him into a strait. With the faith he had, such as it was, and with all his fear about him, he must go and deliver God's message: there was no declining it, without directly sinning against the divine command; and so it is with us continually: the divine dispensations are perpetually calling us out to duty in such a manner, that we cannot decline without downright sin, yet cannot act without much self-denial.

In the way of providence you are called to own Christ in some more extraordinary manner, which you foresee will expose you to the reproach and resentment of the world. At the thought of this, Faith starts back, and Fear pleads. But what can you do? the case is such, that you cannot decline doing what you are called out to, without positively, and with your eyes open, flying in the face of conscience and duty in the matter, without a lively exercise of faith, and a vigorous opposition of fear. You are brought into some outward troubles, out of which your way is open, by some little departure from, but hedged up, strait, and difficult, if you keep firm to, the will of God. Here inclination, ease, interest, shame, and fear of the world, plead strongly for compliance, and trust in God seems not to have strength enough to oppose; you are in a great strait; you must either sin, or suffer; nor can you possibly keep a good conscience without such a self-denial as is

to you as cutting off your right hand. Thus does Christ keep his people, by the peculiarity of his dispensations towards them, at a point with their corruptions, and in such circumstances, that they must use the grace they have, and stand to their duty, if they will not wound their consciences, and plainly give up all by sin; and every child of God may find farther, upon inquiry, that these dispensations have been such as not only, by calling to self-denying duty, had a tendency to improve the whole power of grace, and mortify the whole body of sin, but also to strengthen that peculiar grace which was most needed, and bring down that special corruption that carried its head highest.

4. When by the measure described Christ has brought his people into a strait, that they must either sin, or deny themselves; then, in answer to their prayers, he gives them grace to do their duty, by exerting a more vigorous exercise of grace and self-denial, according

to the present emergency. Now, here it is certain they are not always brought to this upon the spot; for in the power of unbelief they may be declining duty, and coming to a composition of the matter more favourable to flesh and blood, than that of steadfast cleaving to duty would be: so that, instead of immediately flying to the throne of grace, for strength to stand firm to the will of God, they may be for a season hearkening to their own reasonings, and falling upon measures to avoid the cross. Thus we see Jonah did; instead of calling upon God to enable him to the work allotted him in opposition to his sinful fear, and love of ease and life, he rises up to flee into Tarshish; and in all such cases the flesh will not fail to clamour against the strictness of duty, and to plead with all its power for sparing ourselves. And have we not all too much given heed to the arguments of the flesh, till, for a time at least, however plain the

matter appeared at first, we have suffered our eyes in too great measure to be put out by it, and have stood off from duty and suffering? But if we have, by having commited our souls to Christ, been the objects of his peculiar care and love, he has not failed, somehow or other, to bring us to duty and self-denial at last. Jonah could not fly so fast, but that the Lord could overtake and bring him back; however unwilling, Jonah, and no one else, must carry God's message to Nineveh. When we are for flying from duty, and sparing ourselves, the Lord has ways of bringing us to it, and such as the world knows nothing of: he can hide his face from us, take away our comfort and joy, let us walk heavily, give no answer to our prayers, meet us in no ordinances, let Satan loose upon us to haunt us with terrifying apprehensions, raise up our accusing consciences against us, suffer us to fall into some soul-wounding sin. He has ways of

bringing us to duty and self-denial; and though we have escaped the cross by flying from it in one particular instance, yet, by some other way, he will be sure to bring us back to it; we must and shall come to the very point where we went off, and oppose that very lust we were willing to spare. The prophet would not go to Nineveh: we would save our reputation in the world; but Jonah shall go to Nineveh, and we shall be brought to be accounted fools for Christ. Whether sooner or later, Christ, some how or other, brings us back to the point, shews us, that his will must be done, silences all objections, forces us to our knees for strength and might, then gives us what we ask, enabling us to stand to our duty, though, peradventure, with fear and trembling, and to deny our own selves. So you see it is in vain, as well as poor policy, for the children of God to think of sparing themselves, and not coming to duty at the call of God;

since, if God loves them, they must come to it at last, and that, perhaps, through a storm, as it were through the whale's belly. And, now,

5thly, Being brought thus under peculiar dispensations suited to their case, unto the exercise of grace and self-denial, hereby faith is strengthened, and sin loses of its power. This is the very thing signified in the text. As metal repeatedly put into the fire comes out pure, so is grace strengthened, and sin weakened, by exercise and discipline. Neither is it conceivable how sin is become increasingly mortified, or faith abundingly confirmed, unless, under proper dispensations, the one were opposed, and the other called forth into action. The faith of a Christian, as the courage of a soldier, grows by fighting and trials, whereby the one and other advance into greater victories over their fears and inclinations. It was by discipline that the father of the faithful became the eminent

believer he was, and was so nobly exalted above the world and self; and St. Paul could say, that 'though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day.' How was this? Why, 'our light affliction worketh for us a weight of glory;' not only as our afflictions in Christ shall be mercifully remembered, but also as they are made instrumental to our sanctification and meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Every exercise of grace makes some addition to its strength; and every opposition to corruption takes somewhat from its power, while also those exercises of grace which are most trying, are most confirming; and those self-denials which are most severe, do signally crucify the body of sin. Were we left without trials, our measure would be very low; and though we thought sin was well in subjection, it should have lost little of its force. The cowardly monk, unable to hold up his head against the world, may

fly to his cloister, and there conceit himself some great thing in godliness; but the man that keeps his station in life, and by the grace of God maintains his ground amidst every kind of temptation and suffering, will be found incomparably of the two the most like his Master. Whatever the Papists, and those among Protestants, who, blinded by their false devotion, have recommended them for patterns, may say; to seclude ourselves from the world, is not the way to religious improvements. Schemes of that sort are but poor refuges for those who have not faith enough not to fear man, and not to be ashamed of Christ. The examples of those, therefore, who act on that plan, ought at no hand to be commended to imitation. When I hear of a man nothing better than that, giving over his business in the world, and the proper offices of life, he spends his days in religion, or, as it is called, retirement: for my own part, I am far from taking

him for a saint, but must regard him, however well he means, as a dangerous example, whom no one ought to follow, who, indeed, could not be followed, without bringing ruin upon the world, by setting us all idle; and as one, at least, under dangerous mistakes, as well as deprived of all the means of growth in grace, and purification from sin. And in this view, it is my duty to warn you to read with caution those books which have been reformed from the Church of Rome. Even Thomas à Kempis, purged as he has been by the ablest hands as far as it could be done, and excellent as he is in every other respect, yet, if read not with advisedness, will leave this impression on your mind, that, in order to be an eminent Christian, you must retire from the world, and confine yourself to your closet; than which nothing is more contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, more dishonourable to Christianity, nor, as you have heard, more destructive of

spiritual improvement. And thus much of the manner in which Christ proceeds in his work of purging and purifying the hearts of his people. From which it will be proper to make two or three observations which very familiarly present themselves. The

1st is, That in all trials we should endeavour to see the hand of God in the light wherein he is represented in the text, viz. as putting us into the furnace to refine and purify us. If we let things pass over as if they happened to us by chance, we can neither be patient under our trials, nor get any good by them. That kind of unbelief is exceedingly discomfortable which looks no higher than second causes, leaves us without thought of God's providence in our troubles, and suffers us alone to grapple with them, as if we were continually exposed to the rage of men and the malice of the devil, without any restraint from God, or superintendence of his care. But to

see all under a divine direction, and all dispensed with the wisest and kindest design, this takes out the sting of affliction, and promotes a peaceful acquiescence.

2dly, We should always endeavour to see the meaning of the rod; and, since God does not willingly grieve his children, should particularly inquire why this evil is come upon us. Now, the end of affliction being sanctification in the improving our graces and mortifying our corruptions, we must diligently look into our hearts, where we shall soon see what grace God calls into exercise for improvement, and what corruption rises up against God's hand, which it is his will should be mortified; and this should be specially noted and carefully practised. The heart must be thoroughly examined and diligently watched, that God's whole design may appear, and that we may lose nothing of the benefit of our sufferings in the growth of grace,

and victory over sin, to be obtained by them in the inner man.

3dly, We must be steadfast to duty; as the case is, we must consider what the Lord would have us do, and in opposition to ourselves steadfastly do it. To step aside from the way of duty is to surrender ourselves into the hands of our lusts; but to cleave to it, is to bring them into greater subjection, and to gain some addition to the power of godliness in the heart. Pray earnestly in every trial, that your faith may not fail, that you may be enabled to stand to do your duty, and that in no degree you may be detained and hindered by the striving of your own heart. Do this, and every trial and trouble will take from sin, add to grace, and prepare you better for glory.

Lastly, In every trial be looking backward to former experience, that you may be helped to patience, perseverance in duty, and correspondence with the

divine gracious will, by the remembrance of what you have received through past troubles; and be looking forward to the glorious day when Christ will present you to himself an offering in righteousness without the least remaining spot or blemish of sin upon you. Ah! how will you not be encouraged, when in the prospect of that pure and perfected state, you shall look back, and see how the Lord has been sitting over you and refining you for it! And what peace, joy, and thankfulness, will not the thought of this minister to your soul! Thus have I done with the manner of Christ's purifying and purging the hearts of his people. And herewith, with these Discourses, may God grant we may be able to make our profiting by them to appear in our improvement now, and to his praise and glory hereafter. 'For surely not one word shall return void of all that the Lord has spoken.' Now unto

Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

THE END.

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